

Society 150

REMARKS

Upon the following MORAL and RELIGIOUS
SUBJECTS, viz.

PREDESTINATION, | UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION,
GOOD WORKS, | The EXPEDIENCY of FAITH.

To conclude with some Reflections upon the ARTICLES of
our CHURCH, wherein is endeavored to be shewn their
Agreement with the Doctrines of the NEW TESTAMENT,

IN A

SERIES of LETTERS to a FRIEND.

By the Rev. JOHN FRANCIS, M. A.

Author of the LIFE of KING DAVID, and VICAR
of Lakenham, near Norwich.

Quid Verum atque decens, curo et rogo et omnis in hoc sum.

———HOR. Epist. L. I. Ep. I. II.

Πάντα δοκιμάζει τὸ καλὸν κατέχει.

———Pauli, Epist. I. Thess. v. 21.

To which are added,

Three S E R M O N S,

Preached at the ASSIZES held at

THETFORD and NORWICH,

In the YEAR of our LORD 1766.

The first inculcates Subjection to Government.

The second enforces the Necessity of Religion, for the
Welfare and Support of Government.

The Third advises Peace and Good Harmony in conjunc-
tion with Industry in our respective Callings.

AND ALSO

A S E R M O N,

Preached at the PARISH CHURCH of TOPCROFT, in
Norfolk, upon the Death of

The Rev. BENJAMIN FROST, M. A.

RECTOR of that PARISH.

NORWICH: PRINTED BY W. CHASE.
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REMARKS

By the Hon. the Secretary of the Navy

in answer to a Resolution of the Senate

passed May 10, 1844

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TO
THE REVEREND
KENRICK PRESCOT, D. D.
MASTER OF
CATHERINE HALL,
CAMBRIDGE.

In a grateful TESTIMONY
Of his many particular FAVOURS
Shewn the AUTHOR,
Are the following ESSAYS
With all Humility
Inscribed.

TO

THE REVEREND

KENNETH PRESTON, D.D.

MASTERS

CATHEDRAL HALL

CANTON, MASS.

MINISTERS

OF THE

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

OF THE UNITED STATES

AND

WOMEN

THE PREFACE.

B*Y* the numberless Treatises that are every day coming out, and the many Commentaries that Authors are continually publishing upon the Holy Scriptures, a Stranger to our most Holy Religion would very reasonably imagine that its Divine Author had delivered his Doctrines in Terms the most obscure and difficult to be understood. But how great would be his Astonishment, and how vast his Surprise, when, upon reading the sacred Oracles themselves, he should find the Doctrines there taught to be the most intelligible, and the Precepts given us for the Government of our Lives, to be expressed in the clearest and most plain Terms imaginable. Difficult would it indeed be for him to account for those many impertinent publications as they would then seem to him, which are hourly swarming from our Presses, and which would appear to him to be as absurd, as it would be to take a Candle in order to shew any man the Light of the Sun at noon-day.

In this View would things appear, beheld only through the Mirror of Reason and Common Sense, to a person who should be entirely

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unacquainted with our Religion, and likewise with the tempers and dispositions of its Professors. But his Astonishment would soon abate, or rather would have shifted its Scene, when he should have been made acquainted with the numberless opinions and heresies that have arisen since the first preaching of Christianity, and how men according to their various humours and inclinations, appetites and passions have corrupted the Doctrines of the Gospel, and so interposed the Clouds of superstition, blasphemy and idolatry, that the clear Light of God's Word, and the comfortable Rays of the Sun of Righteousness are so far obscured thereby, that the indifferent, careless and unstable, or such as are of any other faulty Disposition of Mind, will be very liable in their Journey to Happiness, to deviate from the Path of Truth, the direct Road leading to it, and insensibly to fall into the Windings of Error and Delusion, in which the farther they travel, the more Intricacies will they meet with, and at length perceive to their utter Shame and Disappointment that Misery is the End of their Progress.

As Heresies have through the Corruption of human Nature arisen in the Church of Christ, the Abettors thereof are continually endeavoring to impress them upon the Minds of their fellow Christians, by insinuating that
they

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they are more agreeable to the Gospel of Christ ~~than~~ the Doctrines they now profess. *than*
To confirm this their Assertion, they produce particular passages out of the sacred Writings, which, when taken apart by themselves, without considering the Connection they bear with some of the preceeding ones, or with those that follow, may perhaps seem at first sight to favor the Doctrine they are desirous of establishing, which, if considered together, would have admitted of a quite different Construction. By this means they often ensnare those of weak Minds and low Understandings, and even sometimes those of superior Abilities, who, thro' neglecting to make a due and impartial Examination, are often led to espouse opinions directly opposite to the Doctrines of the Gospel, which had they with care and attention examined, it is to be charitably hoped, they would not so easily have embraced.

In this situation of affairs it surely becomes every true and sincere Christian, more especially those who are set apart for the Edification and Instruction of all others in true Christian Knowledge, to endeavour to lead back those of their Brethren, whom they behold wandering in the intricate Mazes of Error, into the plain Road of Truth, by explaining the nature and tendency of those Doctrines they have given Credit to,

upon the faith only of others, shewing their Inconsistency with the precepts of the Gospel, and how much they tend in their own nature to destroy the end and design of it, which was the promoting and establishing amongst Mankind true Piety and Virtue.

Amongst the many delusive opinions that have been published, there have scarce been any more destructive and pernicious, direct Infidelity and Atheism excepted, than those broached of late years by some of our modern Enthusiasts, which, though they may at first sight appear very fair and specious, and by misconstruction of some particular texts, may be fancied to have a Foundation in Scripture, are yet, when more maturely considered and examined into, found to be entirely subversive of the practice of all moral Duties, nay of the excellency and virtue of Faith itself, which, to have any real worth in it, must be the affection of a Mind freely left to assent to the sufficient Grounds on which it rests.

To obviate, if he could, the evil tendency such opinions might have upon the unwary and unlearned mind, was the design of the Author, in first writing and afterwards publishing the following Letters. They were originally intended for a particular friend unhappily inclined to the Errors here endeavoured to be confuted, but for some private Reasons none of

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of them were sent him, except the first. But as the Purport of them is universal, and therefore concerns every person who is inclined to receive for Truth any of those Errors, They being intended to expose and shew the falsity of, he thought them not improper to be published. The Rule he has followed to judge of those Doctrines by, are, the Holy Scriptures, not entirely relying upon our translation of them, but having recourse to the original language in which they were written. He has likewise considered the opinions and sentiments of most of those Commentators and Divines, who have at all treated upon the Subject; being of opinion that the sentiments of these learned Men, so far as they were conformable to the Holy Scriptures, would be of service to confirm any thing he shall have delivered. This he did with the greater Pleasure, as it gave him an opportunity of shewing the publick, that he did not blindly follow his own Interpretations of the Scriptures, but as far as his Judgment would allow him, he endeavoured first to discover which was most agreeable to Reason and common Sense as well as the known Attributes of the Almighty, and then explain them to others to whom such a Discovery might not only be agreeable, but useful. For it is an undoubted Fact, That though our most holy Religion requires us to believe

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some Doctrines that are above Reason, and obliges us to give our unfeigned assent to them, as being assured they were dictated by the Spirit of Truth; because, though we cannot now clearly comprehend their nature and reason, through the manifold Infirmities of our Flesh, yet hereafter when we shall have laid aside this our mortal frame, we shall then clearly discern their Truths and Necessity: Yet at the same time it by no means allows us to admit of any that are contradictory to Reason, or in the least degree repugnant to those Attributes of the Divine Nature, such as his Justice, Goodness, Mercy and Wisdom; because all such Doctrines as contradict these essentials of Religion natural as well as revealed, we must be sensible cannot be true, and therefore must in all respect be repugnant to that Religion, whose Doctrines and Precepts were, as we a little above observed, dictated by the Spirit of Truth.

To the above Letters the Author has subjoined four Sermons preached upon publick occasions, submitting them to the perusal of the Publick, as the Doctrine contained in them, may not be improper to be inculcated upon the Minds of People at a time, when things of a sacred and serious Nature are wanted to be more warmly impressed than they well can, only by once hearing from the Pulpit.

L E T-

LETTERS

TO

A FRIEND.

LETTER I.

On PREDESTINATION.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH it ought to be the prerogative of true friendship to inform each other of *any faults*, and to give a gentle admonition concerning them; yet I am at the same time sensible that we are thereby more like to loose than reclaim a friend, which is owing partly to the delicate nature of the task, and partly to the sometimes ungentle, and perhaps, too officious manner of giving Reproofs. Self partiality is too apt to cause every one to imagine *his own* opinions and sentiments of things to be right and *his Neighbour's* wrong, and to think that man impertinently severe who shall pretend to condemn them. In things of an indifferent nature, by which I mean things of little

moment or concern to mankind in general, with regard either to their temporal or eternal Welfare; for any persons to be so stiff in their Judgments concerning them, as on no account whatever to give over contending for their opinion, tho' they are sure by such obstinacy to risk the loss of their Friends; such persons discover *a bad temper*, and but little depth of either reason or judgment. But, when a difference of opinion happens to be concerning any of the essentials of Religion, in which *not only the eternal Interests of our friend, but of Mankind in general* are concerned; then it becomes the duty of every sincere friend, to warn the other of his Mistake, and if possible, to convince him of the error he is in; in which, if he should not be so happy as to succeed, then to caution others how far they lend an ear to him, lest they also be drawn into the same dangerous opinion. I say, this duty is incumbent upon every man; upon every sincere friend in particular; but it is a much more incumbent duty upon the Ministers of the Gospel, whose office St. Paul informs us, in his II. epist. to Timothy, iv. 2. is to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine; or as the original word, διδασκη, would be better rendered, instruction: with all
 gen-

gentleness to instruct those, especially if they be any of our Brethren in the Ministry, who oppose themselves, i. e. who are in any dangerous error; that they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his Will.

HAVING thus prefaced the design of this Letter, I hope, I may presume to enter upon the task, which a true and very sincere friendship has induced me to undertake, viz. to point out to you, with all the Candour and Impartiality in my power, those errors and mistakes in some religious points, which, I think, you have embraced, and which appear to me to be of a very dangerous and pernicious Consequence, not only to yourself, but likewise to the flock committed to your Care, as I have been informed you make no scruple of preaching the same. But if, notwithstanding my Apology, you shall think me to have been too officious in thus informing you of them, I shall be concerned that you should put such an Interpretation upon my Intentions, which I assure you, are sincere and upright; and therefore shall have the pleasure to think that I have herein discharged both my duty and my conscience. All I have further to observe, before I enter upon the subject
of

of my Letter, is, that if you shall find me asserting any thing which contradicts the true meaning of Scripture, the only rule that a Christian ought to be directed by in his examination of any Doctrine of Religion, and which it is my intention, through the blessing of God, here to observe, but which, though never so careful, I may yet mistake, I beg as a favor that you would inform me of it, and I shall upon such Conviction most willingly retract my opinion and the interpretation, on which it was founded, so soon as it is proved to be wrong, *and with the greatest readiness* embrace that which shall be proved to me to be the true one.

To begin then with the Subject of my Letter. I have been informed that you hold that inexplicable and truly unscriptural Doctrine of Predestination, not as it is defined by the Articles of our Church, but in its most extensive sense, as embraced by the most rigid Predestinarians; the Consequence of which is, that you deny the Doctrine of universal Redemption, or in other words, assert that our blessed Lord intended by his Death to save only a few, viz. the elect, and determined to leave the rest of mankind in the same desperate state they would have been in had he not taken upon him our Nature, and suffered in our
stead;

stead; in which they must continue to all eternity, as they are disabled from performing any acts of Righteousness whereby to entitle themselves to the merits of Christs Death, the Almighty having decreed, before their very Birth, to condemn them. This Doctrine in the latitude here described, undeniably taxes the Supreme Being with the greatest cruelty and injustice imaginable, and is therefore most impiously blasphemous and prophane.

THE first Text I shall mention, which you have, it seems, quoted in order to support this Doctrine, according to the latitude above described, is out of *Acts* II. 47. *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*, i. e. say you, those whom he had decreed to save, leaving the rest of Mankind to abide eternal Wrath. This Text at first appearance, according as it stands in our translation, may perhaps bear such an Interpretation; those therefore who are unacquainted with the original may be excused, if put to a stand, not knowing what to answer, when informed that this Doctrine is to be proved from the above and other passages of Scripture. But we, my friend, who are instructed, or at least ought to be, in the original Language in which the Scriptures were written, should turn to them in that Language,

guage, and examine whether the translation we have of them be agreeable to the Construction of that Language or not. For though our translation of the Scriptures be upon the whole a most excellent one; yet, as the persons concerned in it were men like ourselves, consequently fallible, and therefore liable to error, they might, partly thro' prejudice, in favor of some particular doctrine they had espoused, which they would therefore endeavor to establish, and partly thro' a wrong apprehension of the meaning of the original, give such a translation of it, as they would either choose they should, or at least thought they ought to bear. When therefore we duly consider these particulars, if we find any passage so translated, that by its construction it establishes a Doctrine repugnant either to the nature or attributes of God, such as his Unity, his Justice, his Mercy, &c. we ought in this case immediately to turn to the original, and examine whether such a translation be agreeable to it or not; and I make no doubt upon all such occasions we shall find therefrom abundant and ample satisfaction. To apply then what has been said to the case before us. In this passage, which I have cited out of the Acts, as it stands according to our translation, a
 Doctrine,

Doctrines, I say, may perhaps be established upon it, wholly repugnant to the Divine Justice, Mercy and Wisdom. For can we imagine it consistent with any of those Attributes, that the infinitely wise, merciful and just God should decree, without any consideration of Qualifications good or bad on the side of the party, to elect one man to eternal Life, i. e. without any will or desire of his *own to influence him by an irresistible Grace to perform acts* of Righteousness, in order to entitle him to the merits of Christ, and thereby qualify him for eternal Happiness. And that the God of Mercies should on the other hand condemn another to all eternity *for doing what he knew the wretched Creature could not avoid*, without his assisting grace to prevent him, which however at the same time he had determined not to impart to him. This is the Doctrine of Predestination in its full extent, which I have with great concern been informed you not only most firmly believe yourself, but endeavor also to impress it upon others. Now the translation of this Passage, I think, is erroneous; for if we examine the original, we shall find, without any wresting of the words, that they will bear another Construction, which, if it shall be found
not

not to be *contradictory to the Attributes of the Divine Being, as the other certainly is*, we should then give the Preference to it. Now, by the law of our Reason, we are better enabled to judge of Justice, Mercy and Wisdom, as they have Relation to the Supreme Being, than we are at present, or perhaps ever shall be, concerning the Decrees of his Providence. Because, from the knowledge of the one, we are to direct and form our own practice and behaviour in this Life, so as, thro' the Merits of our blessed Saviour, to be at last thought worthy of Inheriting eternal Life; it was therefore necessary we should have certain knowledge of them. But, as our being acquainted with the other would have tended to no better purpose but to perplex us in our Duty, and fill our minds with imaginary fears and doubts, our faculties being, whilst we are in these corruptible Bodies, by the law of our Nature so confined, that it is utterly impossible for us perfectly to comprehend them. God has therefore, in infinite Compassion to us, thought proper to conceal them from us. To proceed then to a Consideration of the Text before us. The Words in the original are as follows:
ο δε Κυριος Προσελθει Τους σωζομενους Καθ' ημεραν
τη εκκλησια. Now what Reason can be
given

given why the word σωζομενους, ought to be translated should be saved? I must own, I can see none; for as it is the participle of the present Tense, passive Voice, the Words should be rendered, were saved; i. e. those who being convinced of the Truth of that Doctrine the Apostle had just been preaching, and having laid aside all prejudices, had embraced the same; God confirmed them thro' Grace in the Belief thereof,* and these were added to the Church or number of true Believers. This appears to me to be the most plain and natural Construction of these Words of the Divine Historian, according as they stand in the original Language, in which there is nothing, I think, repugnant either to the natural notions God has implanted in us of his Nature and Attributes, or to what the Holy Scriptures have revealed concerning them. [But supposing this Verb had been written in the second Aorist of the Potential Mood, there would then have been no occasion for rendering it they should be saved;

* At v. 40 *St. Peter* exhorts them SAYING SAVE YOURSELVES FROM THIS UNTOWARD GENERATION, the σωζομενους then at v. 47. were such as had taken his Advice, and were escaped from the perilous Situation they were before in, THEY THAT GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD (as they are described at v. 41) AND WERE BAPTIZED.

for it would have been equally agreeable to the sense of that sense, and much more so both to Scripture and Reason to have rendered it thus; and the Lord added to the Church daily such as would be saved; in which sense *Beza* has translated it, *Dominus autem addebat quotidie Ecclesie qui salvi fierent*. According to this Translation the meaning is, those who being convinced of the Truth of the Apostles Doctrine, immediately laid aside their former prejudices, and acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and were, by continuing stedfast in that Faith, rendered Objects of Divine Favor, and consequently capable of obtaining eternal Life.] Having, I should hope, sufficiently cleared this Text from that erroneous Interpretation which has been too commonly put upon it, I proceed now to consider that Passage of Holy Writ, where it is said, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, or Pharaoh's heart was hardened, so that he would not let the People go; and again, that the Lord hardened his heart, so that he pursued after them: and yet we afterwards read, that he punished him and his people, by drowning them in the Red Sea, for performing that which, according to the Interpretation of these Expressions, they could not help doing, or were compelled

pelled to do; a Doctrine so repugnant to Truth and Reason, as it contradicts the Divine Justice and Goodness, that we must either renounce the Ideas or Notions God has implanted in us of those Attributes, or else examine whether the words will not bear another Construction; which, upon an impartial examination, I make no question we shall find to be the case. Now the Phrase, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, signifies no more than that the Lord permitted Pharaoh to harden his own heart, accordingly it is in some places expressed by, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and in others by, Pharaoh hardened his heart, (compare Exodus c. vii. v. xx. and xxiii, with Patricks Note, c. viii. v. xv. and xxxii. c. ix. v. vii. and xxxiv. and c. x. v. xx) i. e. in other words, as Pharaoh had withstood the Conviction of his own mind, and had paid no regard to the Divine Judgments, but on each Respite indulged him, sinned yet more, had resisted every overture of Grace that had been offered to him, God then withdrew the Influence of his Holy Spirit, and gave him up to his own corrupt Imaginations, that he might fill up the measure of his Iniquity, and thereby become a Vessel of Wrath fitted to Destruction. And that this is

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the Sense we are to take those Phrases in, appears clearly from Exodus viii. xv. where the Divine Historians informs us, that when Pharaoh saw there was a respite, and that the Lord had destroyed the Frogs out of the Land, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, i. e. he kept not his word with Moses and Aaron, that he wou'd let the People go on their intreating God to take away the Frogs v. 8. The Effect of these wondrous Inflictions ceased as soon as ever he got rid of them, tho' they must have prevailed over any mind less under the Sway of Wickedness. But his Pride and Covetousness reviv'd immediately upon every Respite, got the better of all his past fears, and hurried him on to gratify their demands at any rate. God therefore in this Case permitted Pharaoh to harden his heart, in the same manner, as he afterwards gave leave to Balaam to go with the Messengers of Balak. For as that Prophet, tho' he was sensible his Journey wou'd be displeasing to God, as he was going to curse that people whom God, if they continued obedient to his Law, had determined to bless, was yet resolved to pursue his Course for the sake of the Reward that Balak King of Moab had offered him; so here Pharaoh, tho' he

he was conscious it must be displeasing to God to detain his People any longer, inasmuch as the Almighty had already testified his Displeasure thereat, by the Judgments he had inflicted upon him and his People for having detained them so long, in defiance of his Command to the contrary, was yet determined to withstand all such Conviction, and not suffer Israel to depart, because of the temporal advantage that accrued to him and his Subjects from their Labors. For Pharaoh too well knew, from the workings of his own heart, that he had resisted every means of Grace that had been offered him, else he might reasonably with Justice, have thus argued with the Almighty. Why dost thou demand thy People of me, and punish me with thy Judgments for not dismissing them, when, at the same time, by thy over ruling power, thou hinderest me from obeying such thy Command? Such, I say, might with great Propriety, have been Pharaoh's reply upon this occasion, had he found himself over ruled by a superior power which obliged him to act contrary to the orders that were sent him. But how different, from a Consciousness of his own perverseness, is his Behaviour upon this Occasion. While God was inflicting his Judgements

upon him and his People for their obstinacy and rebellion, the fear of the Lord then mollified his heart; and he sent for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, " I have sinned this time ; the Lord is righteous, and I and my People are wicked." Here we find by his own Confession, that he was very sensible that it was owing to themselves, that he and his Subjects with such obstinacy refused to obey the Divine Command, and not to any over-ruling Act of God's Providence. He therefore proceeds to beg of Moses that he wou'd intreat the Lord to withdraw his avenging hand; for it is enough, he says, i. e. I am sufficiently convinced of the great folly and impiety that I and my People have been guilty of in disobeying the Commandment of the Lord; if therefore by your Prayers you will turn away the Divine Displeasure, and thereby remove from me and my People the mighty thunderings and hail, then I will no longer disobey the Command of God, but will let you depart and ye shall stay no longer. Here is, I think, a plain and open confession of his own and his People's guilt, in having detained the Israelites contrary to the express Command of God, and that it was wholly their own act, in having resisted the

the means of Grace that was offered them, and thereby withstood the Conviction of their own minds. And therefore upon their persisting in their disobedience, after God had removed from them the plague of hail, the Divine Historian informs us, that he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his Servants; not God hardened it, but they themselves. Therefore after such repeated Provocations, God might consistently with the strictest rules of Justice, withdraw from them the Influences of his Holy Spirit, and suffer them, without any farther Restraint, to fill up the Measure of their Iniquity, and thereby at last to procure the Glory of Conqueror to himself. Which Consideration, I think, explains to us that declaration of the Almighty quoted by St. *Paul*, in chap. ix. of his Epistle to the Romans. And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be exalted in all the Earth, i. e. as you have withstood every means of Grace that I have offered, I will by my Judgments make you sensible, that I, who at first raised thee to the Throne of Egypt, do now suffer you to continue thereon, that thro' your obstinacy I may exert my

Power and establish my Authority over the Gods of Egypt, and cause you and all the nations around you to confess that there is no other God in all the World, except the God of Israel. I hope what I have here laid down will in some measure explain to you the true meaning and purport of those Phrases in Scripture of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart, and the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and that nothing in this whole transaction appears to contradict the Divine Justice. As to the Text of St. Paul, in his abovementioned Epistle, ix. xviii. Therefore hath he Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth, is not spoken of any particular Person, but of Nations in general, and the expression Mercy here made use of, does not signify any inward grace, but is meant, his being bountiful in his outward Dispensations of Power, Greatness, and Protection to one People above another, as it is plain from the preceding Verses. I would have given you a paraphrase of this Passage, was it not much better done to my hands by the late learned and celebrated Mr. *Locke*, from whom I shall here beg leave to transcribe it. Therefore that his Name and Power may be known, and taken Notice of in the World

World, he is kind and bountiful to one Nation, and lets another go on obstinately in opposition, that his taking them off by some signal calamity and ruin, brought on them by the visible effects of his Providence, may be seen and acknowledged to be an effect of their standing out against him, as in the case of Pharaoh. In the end, he is bountiful to whom he will or pleases to be bountiful; and whom he will, he permits to make such an use of his forbearance towards them, as to persist obdurate in their provocation of him, and draw on themselves exemplary destruction. This, Sir, is Mr. *Locke's* Paraphrase, the clearness and perspicuity of which will, I hope, appear as evident to you and give you the same satisfaction as it has done me. There are many more Arguments still remaining to be produced to corroborate the Truth of what I have here delivered; but as I have already exceeded the bounds of a common Letter, I shall for the present postpone the Undertaking. In the mean time I remain,

Dear Sir,

With the greatest Sincerity,

Yours, &c.

TOPCROFT, June 30, 1765.

LETTER II.

UPON

UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION.

DEAR SIR,

I Now proceed to consider those particulars which the Limits of my last Letter would not permit me to speak, *to* which I shall endeavor to do, with the same Candor and Impartiality *that I there* made use of. Having already shewn that the Doctrine of Predestination in an unlimited Sense, could not be supported or proved by those Passages of Scripture which I in that considered; I will now proceed to consider the Doctrine of Universal Redemption, which, when I have done, I will endeavor to shew that Predestination in a confined Sense, is not incompatible with it.

FROM every part of the New Testament it appears evident to me, that our Blessed Lord died in order to save the whole race of Mankind; or in other Words,
that

that the merits of his Death should be imputed to all who performed the Will of God, not to them only who were bound under the Gospel Covenant, but to those likewise who live according to that Light God has afforded them, though they have never heard of Christ. Mistake me not, I do not say to them who have known the Gospel, or might have come to the Knowledge of it, but yet rejected its Light, and directed their Lives only according to the inferior Light of Nature; but to those to whom God in his Divine Wisdom did not think fit to impart the Knowledge of the Superior Light, nor yet the means of attaining it, but who had acted according to the Rule of that Light he had given them, and, as far as they were able, had always endeavored to preserve a Conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards Man. This is, I think, agreeable to what *St. Paul* says, 8 Rom. 32. *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.* And again in his 1st Epistle to Tim. II. 4. 5. 6. he says, *Who will have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth, for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man, Christ Jesus,*

Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Now here I am sensible you will immediately object to me, that in order that Men should be saved, they must come to the Knowledge of the Truth: True, I grant it you; but what is that Truth? To them who have the Gospel preached unto them, that is the Truth they must come to the Knowledge of, and put in Practice; neither will any other inferior Light, which before was all they could arrive at, then stand them in any Stead, when having the Advantages of a superior Light, they wilfully shut their Eyes, and refuse being directed by it; agreeable to which is what our Saviour says, 15 St. John, 22. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloak for their Sin.* But the Light of Nature is the Truth to them, to whom God in his infinite Wisdom has not thought fit to impart the Light of Revelation, and they who have acted according to that Light of Conscience which God has given them, and therefore are a law unto themselves, which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing them witness, shall partake of the Benefits of that Sacrifice, whose efficacy reaches not only forward to the end of
Time

Time, but backward to the foundation of the World. To sum up the whole in the following Instance. The Roman Centurion *Cornelius*, recorded by *St. Luke* in his Acts of the Apostles, chap. 10. is mentioned by the Divine Historian, as being, before his Conversion to Christianity, a devout Man, and one who feared God with all his House, who gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to God always. This, I make no doubt, you will allow to be the Character of a good, religious, charitable Man, of one who acted according to the Dictates of his own Conscience, and whose heart could therefore assure him, that he was acceptable in the Sight of God. Now, had it pleased Providence that this good Man should have died without his ever coming to the Knowledge of the Gospel, can we imagine that that Divine Being whose Mercies are infinite, and over all his Works, would have condemned him for not believing in that Religion of the Truth of which he had not been informed; or that the Merits of our Lords Death would not have been imputed to him, because he had not been baptized in the Name of him of whom he had never heard? May we not here with great propriety, join with the Patriarch *Abraham*,

ham, in saying, *That be far from thee to do after this Manner, to slay the Righteous with the wicked, and that the Righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* But then on the other hand I affirm, that after God had sent his Angel to *Cornelius* to inform him that his Righteousness was accepted before him, and as a proof of it, he intended him the Honor to be the first Fruits of the Gentiles, in embracing that Light of the Gospel, and therefore commanded him to send for *St. Peter*, whom he had commissioned to preach *Jesus Christ* unto him; and after the Apostle had come and explained to him the Christian Doctrine, and had shewn him the necessity he was under to embrace it, and be baptized in the Name of *Christ*, he had cast the Word of God behind his back, and rejected the Doctrine of our Saviour thro' carnal pride and obstinacy, esteeming that which was in Truth the Wisdom of God to be only the foolishness of Preaching; or else had paid no regard to the Heavenly Vision, but esteemed it only a vain delusion of his fancy, tho' he had sufficient evidence to the contrary, and which in any other case he would have accounted as such; I say, that in either of these cases

cases he would by such a Conduct have ceased to have been the good Man he was, and all his former righteousness would have become as nothing; neither for the future would either his Prayers or his Alms been equally acceptable in the sight of God, since they would have wanted that principal Ingredient to render them such, viz. Faith in his Promises. See this Argument very fully and beautifully handled by *Dr. Sherlock*, late Bishop of London, in the 12th Discourse of the first Volume of his Sermons. Page 327.

HAVING thus, I should hope, clearly shewn you from Scripture the Doctrine of Universal Redemption, let us now consider a little, whether this be not most agreeable to the nature and attributes of the Divine Being. We believe, I will suppose, God to be the Creator of all things, and that there is no other Being of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness besides Him. It is therefore inconsistent with reason to imagine any thing that is created, to have been created without Him. From the Unity then of the Divine Nature it must necessarily follow, that he is the Father of us all. Indeed, was it consistent with any of the first principles of Reason to imagine, that there could be more Gods than one, then we might suppose

suppose that one part of Mankind was the production of one, and another part of another, and so on infinitum. But in that case that beautiful order and regularity which we may now observe in the World, and that exact Symmetry which we may perceive to have been preserved throughout the whole, would then have been entirely destroyed. For if one was either greater or less than another, he would either counteract or be counteracted; or else supposing one equal to the other, that would only have produced a state of inaction throughout the whole. We must therefore, from the present Scene of things, acknowledge what the Scriptures require us to believe, that there is only one God, who is the omnipotent Creator of all things. Again, we believe that this same Divine Being is infinitely good, just and merciful; for this every work of Nature shews him to be, since his Goodness is manifest over all his Works. Unless we have therefore this faith, our meer belief in God will be of little avail. Now can we think it consistent with any of the Attributes, that he should from all eternity determine to render one part of his Creation capable of attaining eternal Happiness, and to condemn the other part to everlasting Misery, without ~~their~~ *their* having

having performed any thing to merit the one, or to deserve the other? No, infinite Wisdom could never intend any thing so repugnant to his Justice or his Goodness. Besides, can we imagine that God would have sent his only begotten Son, to take upon him our Nature and to suffer Death upon the Cross, in order only to save a part of Mankind? How does such a Supposition diminish the Divine Mercy and Goodness, which was so eminently displayed in the Work of our Redemption? Or can we think, that a Person of such transcendant Dignity and Worth, should divest himself of the Divine Majesty and Glory he had enjoyed with his Father from all Eternity, should come into this gloomy and sad World, take upon him our Nature with all its Infirmities, Sin only excepted, lead a life of Misery and Want, and at last suffer a most painful and ignominious Death, with no other design than to save only a select few, a very few of the human Race, with an Exclusion of the infinitely greater Part, and a bar put against their being benefitted by this Scheme of Mercy. What a contracted Idea does this give us of this merciful undertaking of the Son of God? And with what propriety then can He be called, *the Saviour of all Men.*

I. Tim.

I. Tim. 4 c. v. 10. *and the Saviour of the World*, I. John, 4. 14. But if on the other hand, we allow and acknowledge what the Scriptures assures us is the Case, that our most compassionate High Priest offered himself a Sacrifice *for the Sins of the whole World*, I. John 2. 2. how does it enlarge our Idea of his loving Kindness towards us, and render its influence upon us almost as powerful, as its merit and worth is efficacious with his Almighty Father. That Men should in so many Instances not embrace this offer of Mercy, but reject these comfortable terms of their Salvation, is no objection to this Divine Doctrine of Grace, but only proves, at the same time that it displays the Divine Mercy and Goodness, how depraved our Nature must be by the fall of our first Parents, that when Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing are set before us, with the Assurance likewise that if we will use our own Endeavors to attain the one and avoid the other, we shall then obtain the Assistance of Gods Holy Spirit for our guide and direction, we should nevertheless turn our backs upon it, and refuse to be holden to a crucified Redeemer for Salvation. Thus then from a Consideration of the Divine Nature and Attributes, and the Reason of the thing itself, does,

I think, the Doctrine of Universal Redemption appear evident, and agreeable to what the Scriptures have informed us concerning it.

I now proceed to shew, that the Doctrine of Predestination in a confined Sense, may be drawn from Scripture. Men after the Fall had forfeited all pretensions to eternal Happiness; for *St. Paul* assures us, that the Wages of Sin is death. Their being afterwards put into a Capacity of obtaining eternal Life, was wholly owing to the Goodness of God exemplified in our Redemption by Jesus Christ; for the Apostle proceeds to assure us, that eternal Life is the gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. As therefore our merciful Creator hath proposed everlasting Happiness to all, upon the same terms of Acceptance, viz. Faith and Repentance, and hath, by the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, which he hath promised to all them who shall ask it of him, rendered each one capable of attaining it, he hath removed every reason for Complaint from Mankind, since if they are unhappy, it is wholly owing to themselves, in preferring the Wages of Sin for a Season, to the eternal Favor of God. *But then,* as our imperfect obedience could never entitle us to happiness without the Divine

Mercy and Goodness, it being the free gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord ; because, after we have done all, we are still but unprofitable Servants, we have done no more than was our duty to do, God may, according to his free Bounty and Mercy, reward one with a Superior degree of Glory to another, without affording cause of Complaint to any one. For if all who obey the will of God are for such their obedience rewarded with eternal Happiness, their reward in that case is certainly greater than they are of themselves entitled to, and much more than they could either demand or ask. If therefore God shall in his infinite Wisdom have determined from the foundation of the World, to reward one with a Superior degree of Glory to another, as we are assured by *St. Paul*, that there is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars, for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, who shall reply to God, why dost thou so? Or why did not you, O Lord, exalt me to the same degree of Glory? Shall the thing formed say unto him who formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the Clay, of the same lump, to make one Vessel unto Honor, and another unto

unto Dishonor? Predestination therefore in this case may, I should think, with the greatest Propriety imaginable be esteemed a Christian Doctrine, agreeable to the Divine Nature and Attributes, and which, we shall find, will in the end, tend to display the Wisdom and Goodness of our Creator, and likewise conduce to our greater Happiness. In this Sense I understand that Article of our Church which treats of this Doctrine; and I would desire every one who professes himself a Member of it, to consider, that only the Grace of election is asserted in it, and that the Severity of Reprobation, much talked of, but little understood, tho' embraced in its strictest Sense by too many, is left entirely untouched. And here, after the truly admirable Moderation of our Church, I would wish you, my Friend, and every other Christian to stop and to restrain your Curiosity. For the Doctrine of Predestination in an unconfin'd Sense, is a profound Abyss; in endeavoring to fathom which, it is but to little purpose for the greater part of Mankind to busy themselves, since it is a Mystery above our finite Capacities to comprehend, which therefore God in compassion to our Infirmities has reserved to himself. It by no means becomes us

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then to pry into these Secrets, if I may so call them of the Almighty, much less a Duty incumbent upon us to trouble or perplex our Audiences about them. We ought rather to set forth God's Promises in general Terms, as they are proposed to us in holy Writ, and as it is our Duty to embrace them. If I have been so happy as to satisfy you that there is no foundation for your favourite Doctrines in the Texts already examined, I shall be heartily disposed to endeavor to do the same, as to other Texts, if any still appear sufficient to detain you in these Errors. As to the other particulars, of which I promised to write to you, I must for the present postpone them to another opportunity.

In the mean time,

I remain,

July 13, 1765.

Dear Sir, &c.

LET-

LETTER III.

ON THE

ABSOLUTE NECESSITY

O F

G O O D W O R K S.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING in my two last Letters endeavored to shew you the absurdity and dangerous tendency of the Doctrines of Predestination and Election in an absolute and unconfined Sense ; I now proceed, according to my promise, to shew you, that obedience, or in other words, Good Works are the end, the effect, the due consequence, and the inseparable concomitant of Faith ; otherwise Faith is no longer living, but dead. This is a Doctrine strictly agreeable to Scripture, and which may be proved from every part of it ; but which you absolutely deny, as does likewise a certain Espouser of your Doctrines in some Essays he has lately

lately published. In some of which he seems to assert, that it is to subvert the Gospel to assert that all who perform the Conditions of Faith and Obedience, shall be pardoned and made righteous by the Death and Merits of Jesus Christ; but that we are wholly indebted to the Righteousness of Christ, without any obedience of our own being necessary. I shall now beg leave to shew the fallacy of this Doctrine, which tends to overthrow the Law and the Prophets, which yet our Blessed Saviour has assured us that he came not to destroy but to fulfill.

By the first Law which our Creator made with Man in the person of *Adam*, perfect and unsinning Obedience was required; and in case he transgressed, Death, both temporal and eternal, was the penalty he should incur. Notwithstanding this severe Injunction, Man disobeyed, and broke the only Command his Creator had given him; the Consequence of which was his becoming obnoxious to the penalty to be inflicted. But in the midst of Wrath God remembered Mercy, and most Graciously contrived the Means of our Redemption; and that in such a manner, that Mercy and Justice are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other. That Man, in his lapsed or fallen
state

State, was unable to perform unfinning Obedience, the Condition of the first Covenant, the Almighty sufficiently apprehended. He therefore was graciously pleased to enter into a new Covenant with him, a Covenant of Grace and Mercy. In it he has given us a Saviour, a Person of such transcendent Dignity and Worth, of such inherent Purity and Holiness, that on account of the perfect Innocence of his Life, and for the Sake of the Atonement he has made for Sin by his Sufferings and Death, God has pardoned Man, and received him again into his Favor, having removed the Curse of the Law from him, thro' the Mediation of his eternal and only begotten Son. But then this Covenant though full of Grace and Mercy, is not an unconditional one; tho' the Righteousness of Christ shall be imputed, inasmuch as Man is unable to perform unfinning Obedience, yet still he is to perform that part of the Covenant, which God even now requires from him; for the Gospel Dispensation demands our sincere and best Obedience to its precepts and admonitions, holding forth Pardon thro' Christ to our repented Failings and forsaken Sins. Now if any Man will but carefully attend to the whole Scope and Design of Christianity, as it is delivered

to us in the new Testament, he will find Morality, or in other words, a holy and unblameable Life to be the only Design of the Gospel Precepts. This is the Doctrine *St. John* preaches, first Epistle, 3 c. 8 v. *For this purpose it was that the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil.* And, *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to Titus, says, 2 c. 12. &c. *That the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World; looking for the Blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to Himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* What therefore the same Apostle has said of the Jewish Law, may with much greater Propriety be spoken of the Christian Law, viz. that it is Holy, Just and Good. For let us examine the Gospel, and we shall find no affirmative Precept, but what either enjoins Holiness, in the general or one or more particular Virtue or Habits of Holiness, or some essential Acts of it, or else affords Helps and Means to the acquiring of it. And on the other hand,
there

there is not one negative precept, but forbids the contrary to any of these Duties, which may tend to the depraving of human Nature, and thereby render us completely wicked. Our Divine Lawgiver commands us to be perfect, even as our Father which is in Heaven, is perfect. He has assured us, that he only who doeth the Will of his Heavenly Father, shall enter into his Kingdom. In answer to the Question the *Lawyer* proposed to him, viz. which is the first Commandment of all? He enjoins us first, to love the Lord our God, with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls, and with all our Minds, and with all our Strength; and then secondly, to love our Neighbour as ourselves. Our Lord is not contented with prescribing the eternal Acts of Piety only, but he requires likewise the most intensive Holiness; Holiness not merely of Actions and Words, but even of Thoughts and Affections. When we worship God, our worship must not terminate in the bare external Act only; but we must worship him with the Spirit, as well as with the outward Man; in a holy Frame and habit of Mind, as well as a holy Life. For our Divine Instructor assures us, *that God is a Spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth, for the Father*

Father seeketh such to worship him. iv. *St. John*, 24. The Gospel not only forbids Murder, as the Law before it did, but likewise all causeless Anger, Malice and Revenge. Thou shalt not be Angry, says the Blessed Jesus, with thy Brother without a Cause, That if we come to offer our Gift at the Altar, and there remember that our Brother has ought against us, we must there leave our Gift, and go our way, and be first reconciled to our Brother, and then come and offer our Gift. We are to love our Enemies, bless them who curse us, do good to them who hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us. Both Laws forbid Adultery; but here the Christian does not stop; for it not only prohibits Adultery, but likewise all impure Thoughts, that we are no more to cherish Sin in the Heart, than practise it in the Conversation. For our Blessed Master assures us, that he who Lusts after a Woman, hath committed Adultery already with her in his Heart. The Christian Law not only forbids Theft, Injustice and Fraud, but Covetousness also, and a too eager desire after the Riches of this World; for our Saviour expressly commands us not to lay up Treasures upon Earth, in such a Manner as to run the
risque

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risque of forfeiting our Treasure in Heaven; because where our Treasure is, there will our Heart be also. Christianity likewise requires the most extensive Holiness. The Precepts of our Blessed Lord commands us not only to give unto God the things that are Gods, but also to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars. Not only to fear God, but also to honor the King and all that are put in Authority under him, and to pay a due submission to our Spiritual Governors, as to those who watch for our Souls. It prescribes precepts likewise for the discharge of all the relative Duties of Social Life. Wives are to submit themselves to their own Husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands to love their Wives, even as Christ loved the Church. Children to obey their Parents in the Lord; and Fathers not to provoke their Children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants to be obedient to their Masters, with singleness of Heart, as unto Christ; and Masters to do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, or an unkind Behaviour towards them, as knowing that they also have a Master in Heaven, with whom is no respect of Persons. *Ephesians*, 5 and 6 chap. The Gospel commands us not only to
love

love our Friends, Relations and Neighbours, but when we behold a Stranger, or see even an Enemy in Distress, to follow the Example of the good Samaritan, by pouring into his Wounds both Oil and Wine, i. e. by affording him all the Relief that lays in our power to give him. In short our Divine Lawgiver enjoins us always to do that to another, which, all Circumstances considered, we should be willing to have done unto ourselves; for this is that Golden Rule, that truly Divine Precept which comprehends in itself all the Moral Instructions of both the Law and the Prophets. Such is the Law which Christianity prescribes us; such the Doctrine which the Gospel teaches us; the sole tendency of which is to raise and purify our Affections, and spiritualize our Natures.

HAVING thus shewn you that the end and design of Christianity, both in its precepts and prohibitions, is to promote Holiness, Holiness of the Heart, and in every relation of Life; I proceed now to shew you that its Promises and Threatnings have the same tendency. And first its Promises. Our Saviour begins his Divine Sermon upon the Mount with pronouncing Blessings upon the Meek, the Merciful, and the Pure in Heart. Blessed,
said

said he, are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth, i. e. such shall generally be protected in the peaceable Possession of their Rights in this World, by the peculiar Providence of God; or however, shall be entitled to an Inheritance in that new Earth, wherein Peace and Righteousness will for ever reside. Blessed are the Merciful for they shall obtain Mercy; i. e. to such God will be proportionably Compassionate, in the more ready forgiveness of their Sins, and bestowing on them a greater abundance of his Mercy. Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God; i. e. to such God will make greater and clearer Manifestations of himself in this Life; and in the next they shall enjoy a higher degree of Happiness, by ~~holding~~ all the unveiled Beauties of his Nature, and by being blessed with the clearest Discovery of all the Mysteries of Divine Goodness. Now the Happiness promised in the Gospel as our Reward, being of this Spiritual Nature, without any mixture of Grossness or Sensuality, we may easily comprehend the design and tendency of those Premises, viz. that Holiness, and our sincere Endeavors after a Similitude of the Divine Perfections must necessarily be implied as the Conditions, without which our Souls cannot

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cannot possibly be qualified and put into an apt Disposition for them. Secondly, that the Treatnings of the Gospel, which are most terrible and affecting to flesh and blood, have the same End and Design, viz. to promote Virtue and Holiness amongst Mankind is, I think, beyond all dispute. For they are never wont to affright Men from any thing, but what in its own Nature tend to pollute and debauch their Souls; their Tendency therefore is effectually to excite us to Diligence and Industry in the pursuit of real Righteousness and substantial Holiness. The Wrath of God, saith *St. Paul*, is revealed from Heaven in the Gospel, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men; i. e. such as disbelieve and disobey the Precepts of the Gospel in general, and particularly such as are guilty of Idolatry, Adultery, Fornication and uncleanness of all sorts, Theft, Covetousness, Drunkenness, Reviling, Wrath, contemptuous Behaviour, Implacability, Unmercifulness, Illiberality, Malice, Censoriousness, Lying, Pride, Hypocrisy, Rebellion, and Disobedience to Governors. For they who are guilty of these or the like Crimes, the Apostle goes on to assure us, shall not enter the Kingdom of God, but shall have their Part in the Lake which

which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.

HAVING thus explained how the Precepts, Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel tend to promote true Piety and Holiness; I now beg leave to shew you, in as concise a Manner as I can, that the promoting the same great End was the design of our Blessed Masters whole Life and Conversation amongst Men, as well by his Doctrine as by his Example. I have already shewn you how the Laws he has given us to direct and govern our Lives by, answer this Divine Intent. If we proceed to examine his Parables and other Discourses, we shall find they have the same End in view; not one of them he uttered, but contains something highly conducive to enforce some Virtue or other upon the Minds of those to whom he directed them. To mention only a few. In the Parable of the *Pharisee* and *Publican*, how strongly does he condemn the Pride and Haughtiness of the *Pharisees*, shewing how odious in the Sight of God their rash censuring and judging of others were! and then in the Person of the humble *Publican*, what an amiable Portraiture does he draw of Humility and Meekness, Virtues so necessary to the rendering our Repentance real and sincere, that

that without them it is impossible to have that sorrow which needs not to be repented of ! and how immediately do our own Hearts suggest what our Blessed Saviour pronounces concerning them, that this Man went down to his House justified rather than the other, In the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, we are in a most lively and affecting Manner shewn how much we shall be mistaken in our Judgments of human Happiness, if we form them from the outward Circumstances which relates to this Life only. In it we have the most awakening Considerations offered us to pursue or follow after Charity and a Holy Life, in the relation of the different States allotted to each after Death, and towards the close of the Parable, have the strongest and most convincing Argument given us to rest satisfied with those Revelations which God has been pleased to make us of his Will, and that we ought not to expect or desire more. His Parable of the *Good Samaritan* must inspire us with universal Charity. The Reception the returning *Prodigal* met with from his Father, must afford the greatest Sinner encouragement to Repentance and Amendment. In short, there is not one Parable of our Divine Instructors, but is at once beautiful

ful in its Composition, and fully fraught with useful Precepts and Instructions. In taking a view of his Life and Conversation, we shall find every action he performed had a tendency to infuse into the Souls of Men true Piety and Holiness. That truly pious and learned *Dr. Edward Fowler*, late Lord Bishop of Gloucester, in his excellent Performance, entitled the Design of Christianity, has given us this beautiful Portrait, which I shall here, without any Apology, as it needs none, take the Liberty of Transcribing. When it was told him that his Mother and his Brethren sought for him, he took that Opportunity to tell them, *that whosoever will do the Will of God, the same is his Brother, his Sister and Mother.* iii. St. Mark. 35. When he observed a reasoning amongst his Disciples, which of them should be greatest in the Kingdom of God, he took occasion from thence to preach to them the necessity of the Grace of Humility, and becoming as little Children; of Self Denial, Mortification of their beloved Lusts, and to teach them several other excellent Lessons. And as it was the Business of all his Discourses to inculcate Virtue, so as it was also of his Actions. He preached Holiness to Mens Eyes no less than to their Ears, by

Bishop

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giving

giving them the most admirable Example in his own Person of all the several Parts of it; and his whole Life was one continued Lecture of the most excellent Morals, of the most exact and sublime Virtue. For instance; he was a Person of the greatest Freedom, Affability and Courtesy; there was not in his Conduct an Action that was at all austere, crabbed or unpleasant. Tho' he was always serious, yet he was never sour, sullenly grave, morose or cynical, but of a very conversable, gentle and benign Temper. Those who received Checks from his Disciples, as rude and troublesome, were never found fault with by him for being so, but were kindly listened to, and lovingly received; even little Children, as unwelcome as they were to them, were tenderly Embraced and Blessed by him. He never blamed any for interrupting him in his Discourses or other Business but ever patiently heard them, and sent none of them from him (supposing they had no Ill Design in coming to him) without Satisfaction. The too often infirm, imprudent and impertinent Talk of his Disciples and others, could not at any Time put him out of his good Temper, but only gave him an opportunity of imparting to them seasonable Instructions and
 wise

wise Counfels. The Candour alfo and Ingenuity of his Spirit to great Admiration difcovered itfelf; of which he gave an illuftrious Inftance in his laft Agony. The gentlenefs and meeknefs of his Difpofition ever appeared. Never had any one fuch ftrong Provocations to Anger and Refentment as the Bleffed Jefus; but never was either fo undifcernable in any as they were in him. Nor was it ever in the Power either of the calumniating and blaſphemous Tongues, or rude and cruel Hands of his bittereft Enemies to force from him fo much as a reviling or fierce Word. Nor was his Meeknefs lefs to be paralleled or more obfcruable than his great Humility; from whence indeed *that* proceeded, and was no ſmall Expreffion of *this*. And how full he was of Charity and tender Compaſſion, is beyond expreſſion; for as he recommended to his Difciples, and inculcated upon them nothing more than (nor ſcarcely fo much, as) this Virtue, he was himſelf remarkably exemplary in the Exerciſe of it. In ſhort of every other Virtue, both towards God and towards Man, he never failed to give an illuftrious Inftance, as the Scriptures will testify, if you will ſearch them. I ſhould now proceed to conſider ſome of thoſe Paſſages of *St.*

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Paul's Epistles, which seem to favor the
Doctrine you have espoused; but as this
Letter is rather grown into too great a
Length, I will refer this Subject to my
next.

In the mean Time,

I remain,

Your affectionate

Friend and Brother.

TOPCROFT,

September 4, 1765.



LET-

LETTER IV.

THE

ABSOLUTE NECESSITY,

OF

GOOD WORKS,

FARTHER CONSIDERED.

DEAR SIR,

I N my last Letter I insisted upon the Necessity of good Works as essential to our obtaining eternal Salvation, and there endeavoured to shew you, that to explain and enforce the important Doctrines of Morality upon the Lives and Consciences of Men, both by his Precepts and Example was one of the great Ends in the eternal Son of God becoming Man. I should now proceed, as I promised in the Conclusion of my last Letter, to consider ^{some} of those Passages of *St. Paul's* Epistles, which seem in some Measure to favor the Doctrine you have espoused.

But before I enter upon that Subject, I beg leave first to inform you that some other particulars relating to our Blessed Lord, as his Death, Resurrection, Ascension into Heaven, and his Second coming at the End of the World in order to judge Mankind, and to reward or punish them according as their Actions shall then appear to have been either good or bad in his Sight, with whom is no respect of Persons, have the same tendency, viz. to promote in us true Piety and Holiness of Life. Now one chief design of our Saviours dying upon the Cross was demonstratively to prove to us, that Sin is in itself so hateful, so displeasing in the Sight of God our Creator, and so repugnant to his Nature, that he would accept of no less a Sacrifice for the Atonement of it, and thereby to render Man an object capable of being again made partaker of his Mercy and loving Kindness, than the Death of his eternal and only begotten Son. For can we imagine, can we but once suppose that if the Sacrifice of any other Being of less Dignity and Worth, as of any one of the Angels, for instance, one of that innumerable Company, that are continually waiting round the Throne of God, he would not have accepted of it? Or can we

we think, that after having accepted of no other Sacrifice for Sin, than his eternal Son's taking upon him our Nature, and in that suffering the Punishment that our Crimes had rendered us obnoxious to, the Weight of which was so great as to make even this Divine Person cry out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me; that he should still connive at the Wickedness and Impiety of Mankind, or that he should permit Sin still to reign in our Flesh? Impossible! No Man sure of cool and impartial Reason, or whoever reflects upon the Consequences of things, can ever admit of or give credit to so blasphemous an absurdity. If now we turn to the sacred Writings, we shall find that they deliver and confirm the same great Truth, of which Reason and Judgment had before convinced us. Thus our Lord himself speaks to his Disciples, and in them to the whole Christian Church.

14. *St. John, 21. He that bath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him;* which is the same as if he had said, ye must always remember that the one principal and absolute necessary Condition upon which my future Love and Favor, and consequently

the whole Scheme of your Redemption depends, so as to render it of any advantage to you, is, that ye continue stedfast and unmoveable in your Faith in me, and in your obedience to my Commands. For he and he only, who embraces my Doctrine, and obeys and practises it, shall be judged to be sincere in his Love towards me. And he and he only, who thus loves me, shall be loved by my Father; and to such, and such only will I shew Love, and make greater and more glorious Manifestations of myself. And to put this past all doubt, he tells his Disciples, that as it was by his Obedience the Father so loved him as to accept of his Sacrifice, so by our Obedience alone can we ever have any title to the Blessed Effects of it. 15 chap. 10. *If ye keep my Commandments ye shall abide in my Love, even as I have kept my Father's Commandments and abide in his Love.* i. e. the way to express your Love towards me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my Commandments; even as I by keeping my Father's Commandments have expressed my Love not only towards you, but also towards him, and therefore continue to be so loved by him, as to be able through his Love to me to bring you unto Glory. Agreeable to this of our Lord is
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the Doctrine of *St. Paul*, who in the 6 ch. of his Epist. to the Rom. 6 v. says, *Knowing this, that our old Man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin should be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin*; and in his 2d Epistle to the Corinthians, 5. 15. he assures us, *that Christ died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for them*. And again in his Epistle to Titus, 11. 14. he says, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works*. *St. Peter* likewise preaches the same Doctrine in the 1st chap. of his 1st Epistle, v. 18. 19. he says, *For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, from your vain Conversation received by Tradition from your Fathers, but by the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Blemish and without Spot*: And chap. 11. 24. of the same Epistle, he says, *Who his own Self bare our Sins in his own Body upon the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness, by whose Stripes ye were healed*. In the Death of our Saviour thus considered are contained the strongest and most forcible Arguments to a Holy Life, and that upon the most power-

powerful Motive imaginable, viz. Self Love. For who that has any regard for himself, will not be powerfully inclined to hate all Sin, when he finds that by cherishing it, he forfeits all Pretensions to the merits of Christ's Death? None certainly but a Madman or a Fool. Besides who that has the least spark of Generosity in his Breast, will not be inclined to hate all Sin, when he considers that it was the Cause of such dreadful Sufferings to a Person so deservedly dear to him, to so valuable a Friend, in short to a Person of so much Worth and Dignity, as the only begotten Son of God? Who but a Creature that is entirely destitute of every principle of Gratitude and Ingenuity, and therefore even below the Brutes, could take a Pleasure in indulging himself in Sin, when he should come to reflect, that every time he thus gratified his Passions, he again thrust a spear into his Saviours Side; he was cherishing as his Bosom Friend that which was, and ever must be the Lord of Glory's worst Enemy? I proceed now to shew that our Blessed Saviour's Resurrection from the dead is likewise an Emblem that we ought to die unto Sin, but rise again unto Righteousness. This *St. Paul* very much and very often insists upon in his Epistles, wherein

wherein he endeavors to shew that the Doctrine of our Lords Resurrection ought to be a Principle of promoting true Piety and Virtue, which is proposed to us, as that which we ought to have not only a speculative and notional, but also a practical and experimental Acquaintance with, and he often informs us it is our duty to find that in our Souls which bear an Analogy to it. He assures us that it was the utmost of his Ambition to know or feel within himself the Power of Christ's Resurrection, as well as the fellowship of his Suffering; to have Experience of his being no longer a dead, but a living Jesus, by his enlivening him, and quickening his Soul with a new Life. And therefore in his Epistle to the Rom. vi. 4. he says, *We are buried with him by Baptism into Death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life*; i. e. Christians being plunged into Water by Baptism, signified their being obliged, in a spiritual Sense, to die and be buried with Christ; which is, in other Words, renouncing and forsaking all their Sins, that so answerable to his Resurrection, they may live holy and godly Lives. The same use which the Apostle here makes of our Lords Resurrection, he

he does also in another Place of his Ascension into Heaven, and sitting on the right Hand of God, as appears from the 3d chap. of his Epistle to the Colossians, 1. 2. v. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God; set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* And in the 12 chap. of his Epistle to the Hebrews, he thus exhorts them, *To lay aside every weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset them, and to run with Patience the Race that is set before them; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God.* And again, our Saviour having declared to us that he will come at the End of the World to judge all Men according to their Works, most certainly implies, that if we be found deficient in Goodness and true Holiness, the Merits of what he has done and suffered for us shall not be imputed unto us; the serious and awful Consideration of which should stir up in our Breasts a fervent Spirit of unaffected Piety and Virtue; in as much as without Holiness, the Apostle very affectingly assure us, that no
Man,

whether Jew or Christian, shall see the Lord.

HAVING discussed these few Points, I now proceed, as I at first intended, to consider some of those Passages in *St. Paul's Epistles*, which might as I observed, seem at first Sight to favor the Doctrine you have espoused. In doing of which I shall leave to premise the few following Remarks. It is evident, that Sin is the Transgression of the Law, and that, *Where there is no Law, there is no Transgression*, 4 Rom. 15. *By the Law therefore is the Knowledge of Sin*, 3 chap. 20 v. By the Term, Law, here made use of, *St. Paul* plainly means that Discovery only of the Divine Will, which was made to Mankind before the Birth of our Saviour, and particularly that which was made to the Jews under the Mosaick Dispensation, in Opposition to the Christian or Gospel Covenant. The Apostle's styling it the Strength of Sin, must certainly be understood to imply something more, than it's merely being the Occasion of the Knowledge of Sin. It is evident therefore that it must signify the Revealing so much of the Heinousness of Sin and the Guilt attending it, but at the same time not discovering the Means sufficient for recovering Mankind from

from it. Now unfinning Obedience was the Terms required by God under the first Covenant that he had made with Mankind in the Persons of our first Parents, which they by their Transgression had rendered their Posterity unable to perform, since from that Period their Nature had lost it's original Purity and Perfection, and their Wills were now become corrupt and prone to that which is Evil thro' the Lusts of the Flesh having thereby got the Ascendency over their rational Powers; all Men therefore were necessarily concluded under Sin. The Jewish Law, which succeeded this original Covenant God had made with Mankind, so far as it was distinguished from and opposed to the Grace of the Gospel, was in it's severity the same with that first Law God had given, according to which it was that Death, temporal as well as eternal, was the Punishment annexed to Transgression. According to this judicial Part of both Laws God indeed never dealt with Mankind, but by Promises and Prophecies attended with Sacrifices under the first Dispensation, and by the same, and many other Types and Figures, more expressive of what was to be hereafter under the second, did he anticipate to them the Grace of the Gospel, but this third or
last

last Dispensation was never expressly declared till the coming of the Son of Righteousness, by the gracious Terms of whose Gospel it was that Men were absolutely delivered from the Dread and Bondage of rigorous Law, God having given us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. and then it was that Mercy and Truth were met together, that Righteousness and Peace had kissed each other. The Authority of God being supreme, and the Condition of all Creatures absolutely dependant upon him, unfinning Obedience according to the Terms acquired by the first Covenant, was therefore indispensably due to his Commands. All Violation therefore of it was to be punished by Death. *In the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* 2 Genesis 17. It is true both before and under the Jewish Dispensation the World entertained great and reasonable Expectations, that God wou'd be Merciful to returning Sinners; but then these Expectations were not grounded upon any absolute Condition which that Law encouraged them to hope for, but were founded, either on the natural Notions Men justly entertained of the compassionate Mercy of the Supreme Being towards his Creatures so manifestly displayed through-

throughout all the Works of both Creation and Providence; or else on those obscure Promises which God had made to *Adam*, and in him to his whole Posterity, of a future Messiah, who was by his Death to expiate the Sins of Mankind; or else lastly by those many Purifications and Sacrifices prescribed in the Jewish Religion which were in general esteemed by that Nation, as figurative of that grand expiatory Sacrifice which was to be made by the Redeemer of Mankind. The Jewish Law therefore in itself neither did, nor could give this certain Assurance, but only we see glanced obscurely at it under Types and Shadows, since God had in his infinite Wisdom determined that no such Terms of Salvation should be openly preached till the fulness of Time was come, wherein he should send his ever Blessed Son to take upon him our Nature, and declare the glad Tidings of Salvation, and by his Death expiate for our Sins, nailing the Curse denounced against them to his Cross, and by his Resurrection from the dead, rendering those who should hereafter obey his Gospel, justified from their Sins, to accomplish which the Sacrifices appointed under the Law were by no means sufficient, they being no otherwise efficacious then

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as they were Types and Figures of this true one, which by virtue of the Union of the Divine Nature with the Human, was able to save all who thro' Faith and Obedience had rendered themselves Objects of the Divine Mercy. Upon this Account it is, that *St. Paul* so often in his Epistles makes use of these or the like Expressions, *That by the Deeds of the Law there should no Flesh be justified; for that as many as are of the Law, are under the Curse, &c.* Romans, 20. &c. For, as I just now observed, tho' the Law did appoint certain Sacrifices for the expiation of Sin, yet they had in themselves no sufficiency for that Purpose, and were not of themselves of any other Value, then as they were Types of that great Sacrifice, which was once at the End of the World to be made for the Sins of Mankind, and therefore could not make him who did the Service perfect as pertaining to the Conscience. This is the Sum of *St. Paul's* reasoning, when he says, *The Law having a Shadow of good Things to come, and not the very Image of the Things, could never with those Sacrifices, which they offered Year by Year continually, make the Comers thereunto perfect.* 10 chap. Hebrews, verse 1.

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HENCE,

HENCE, though those good Men, both before and under the Jewish Law, as the Patriarch's and Prophets, were justified; yet in what Manner are they declared to be justified? Not by the Works of the Law, as Sacrifices and burnt Offerings and other ritual Ceremonies, but by Faith, as is clear from *St. Paul's* reasoning throughout the whole 4th chap. of his Epistles to the Romans, wherein his Meaning is, that they trusted not to ritual and ceremonious Rites only, but, through the Types and Shadows of the Law looked forward with the Eye of Faith to the promised Messiah, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform; and this was the Faith which God accounted unto them for Righteousness; not a bare simple Faith, such as the Enthusiasts of this present Age contend for, but a Faith that worketh by Love, i. e. which produced an Obedience correspondent thereto.

THE Argument therefore which *St. Paul* makes use of is very just, when he says, that *Abraham* was not justified by the Works of the Law, i. e. by it's Sacrifices and other ritual Observances, so as by his Performance of them, to have wherewith to glory before God; but
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that he was justified by Faith, i. e. in looking upon them and esteeming them but as Types and Shadows only, trusting that God would in his own due Time, when in his infinite Wisdom he should see it would be most proper, and best answer the End he intended thereby, he would then, I say, produce the Substance, by whose fulness their Deficiency should be more than sufficiently supplied. For through the Influence of this Faith it was, that at the Command of God he left his Kindred, Family and Country to go unto a strange Place, where he had not so much as the least Possession, but which the Almighty had assured him that his Posterity should afterwards receive for an Inheritance, and therefore he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in Foreign Country; for he looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. And in like Manner the rest of the Patriarch's and Prophets, who lived under the Law, and observed its Rites and Ceremonies, did by no Means expect to be justified in the Sight of God by the Works of the Law, but by their Faith in God, and their Trust in his Promises; so that the Law, as the Apostle argues, was their Schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ; and though

they were truly sensible that nothing in the Law could barely of itself, avail effectually to the pardon of Sin, yet they continued with patience walking in the Commandments of God, at the same time having a lively hope that if they did not, yet that their posterity should one time or other behold the Consolation and Redemption of Israel. From this view then of the difference between the Jewish Law and the Christian Covenant, it plainly appears, I hope, in what sense we are to understand those Phrases of St. Paul, made use of by him in many of his Epistles, wherein he chooses to magnify Faith in opposition to the Works of the Law, which must be, we see, in opposition to the ceremonial part of it, and not the moral; for in none of his Epistles does he oppose Faith to good Works; but in many parts of all of them, does he endeavor to shew the absolute necessity of them; asserting *that Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 8. in his Epistle to the Romans, ii. 13. he assures his Christian Converts, *that not the bearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified*, which may be reckoned a paraphrase as it were of that Assertion of our Lord, *that not every*
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one who saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in Heaven. His Philippian Converts he thus advises, iv. 18, *Finally Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.* And once more, not to enumerate Quotations too much, in his Epistle to Titus, iii. 8. he says, *this is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works; these are good and profitable unto men.* Now as he wrote all his Epistles by the Inspiration and under the Direction of the Holy Spirit, the Fountain of Truth and the Source of all Virtue, he must in all of them be consistent with himself, and cannot therefore be supposed to have asserted in some of his Epistles that good Works were necessary to salvation, if he had in others of them absolutely denied either the expediency or necessity of them; for that would in fact be to make the Spirit of God inconsistent with Himself; the great and blasphemous

Impiety of which we every one of us, I hope, clearly discern.

I HAVE thus shewn you in what sense we must take those Passages in St. Paul's Epistles, which at first sight seemed to separate Faith and good Works from each other, and therefore might perhaps appear to countenance your favourite opinion, but which upon a nearer and more impartial view and examination do absolute condemn it. But before I close this Letter I beg leave to explain to you the much mistaken Doctrine of Christ's imputed Righteousness. Now this I take to be the true meaning of it. That it consists in dealing with sincerely righteous persons, as if they were absolutely so, for the sake of Christ's Righteousness. The grand and primary design of the Gospel of Christ, was to make us partakers of an inward and real Righteousness; it being a secondary one, that we should be accepted and rewarded, as if we were completely righteous. Any other notion therefore of this Doctrine cannot be at all consistent with Truth. For as from the whole Gospel it appears that there cannot be any such Imputation of Christ's Holiness, as shall tend to render men remiss in their prosecution of an inward and real Holiness; so it is likewise evident that that Doctrine is designed

signed for a motive to encourage and quicken men in their endeavors after such Righteousness as is so. In treating upon these two very important points of Doctrine, I have not entirely depended upon my own shallow experience in the sacred Writings, but in my explanation of the first of them, have made free with the sentiments of the late Reverend and learned Dr. *Samuel Clarke*, as I found them consistent with the Doctrine of Christianity, as delivered in the New Testament, having taken the substance of his Argument in that his most excellent Discourse, wherein he shews how the Law is said to be the strength of Sin, 5 Vol. 8th. Ser. And in my explanation of the latter, I took for my Guide, that truly pious Prelate Dr. *Edward Fowler*, formerly Lord Bishop of *Gloucester*, who in his admirable Treatise, entitled the Design of Christianity, has with the greatest clearness and perspicuity handled this Argument, Sect. 3. Chap. 6. What other points I have still to treat of, I shall beg leave to refer to my next Letter. At present therefore I shall conclude this Epistle with wishing you every Degree of Happiness you are capable of here, with a Reversion of it in futurity.

I am, Dear Sir,

TOPCROFT,
November 16, 1765.

Your affectionate
Friend and Brother, &c.

LETTER V.
OF THE
EXPEDIENCY OF FAITH
TO PROCURE
TRUE AND SINCERE
OBEDIENCE.

DEAR SIR,

I Concluded my last with a promise to enter, as soon as convenience would permit me, upon those points of doctrine that I have not as yet taken notice of. Having in my two last shewn you from various Proofs drawn both from Reason and Scripture, the necessity of Good-works towards the obtaining eternal Salvation; I shall now proceed to explain to you the Expediency of Faith to the procuring in us this true and sincere Obedience, the consequence of which will prove its absolute necessity. In the Prosecution
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of this Argument, I shall beg leave to enquire, what Idea it may be supposed St. Paul annexed to this term, Faith, when made use of by him in his Epistles; which will, if I am not mistaken, evidently demonstrate to us, that Obedience never was excluded from that Faith which was delivered by the Apostle, as necessary to Salvation. Now Faith, or Faith in God, in the most obvious and natural Sense, is an assent of the mind to the certain Existence of an all perfect Being, eternal, immutable, omniscient and omnipresent, and to the Truth of that which he shall reveal. But in the Instance of Abraham, of whom St. *Paul* in the 4th Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and at the 3d verse, affirms *that he believed in God, and that was reckoned unto him for Righteousness*, his Faith in this case, was such a firm and lively assent to the certainty of that Promise, as disposed him, in consideration of it, to comply with that command of God with which it was accompanied. This act of Faith then was of a fœderal Nature, solemnly engaging for some Conditions required, in view of some Considerations offered, and Rewards annexed to them. From this use then made of the Term, Faith, by St. *Paul* in many of his Epistles, in those particularly to the Romans and Galatians, I think,

think, it may be evidently shewn, that the Apostle never intended to exclude Obedience from that Faith, which he asserts to be necessary for Justification of Life. In farther discoursing upon this Argument, it will be expedient to consider some other Terms made use of by *St. Paul* in many of his Epistles upon this and the like occasions. As 1st. what the Apostle meant, when he pronounced Abraham the Father of the faithful to be justified without the deeds of the Law. The late Reverend and learned Dr. *Stanhope* Dean of *Canterbury*, in his most excellent Comment upon the Epistles and Gospels of our Church, says, to justify is a Term properly belonging to Processes and Courts of Law, and is set in direct opposition to *Condemnation*. Now this, when done by God the righteous Judge of the World, must necessarily proceed upon one of these two Grounds : either First, that the Party so justified is altogether innocent, and strictly chargeable with no Guilt at all ; but to this none could ever pretend, except that immaculate Lamb, the eternal Son of God, who was put to death for the Sins of the whole World. Or else Secondly, the Party being obnoxious to the Guilt of wilful and deliberate Sins, what Crimes soever he hath formerly committed, they are entirely pardoned

done and passed by, and can no more rise in Judgment against him, than if they had never been committed at all. Any Person therefore, to whom such gracious Terms are covenanted, is in the Eye of the Law, (though not absolutely in himself) esteemed and reckoned as a righteous Person. When the Apostle therefore declared Abraham to be justified without the Works of the Law, it is sufficiently clear, that he meant by Justification that Absolution from Guilt, which that Patriarch received at the Time of the Promise being made to him, when he was freed from the Condemnation and Punishment that was due to that idolatrous Course of Life, which he had to that Time persisted in. It can therefore by no means be made to infer, that the Patriarch would still have continued in a state of Justification, if from that Time in which God had revealed himself to him, he had not forsaken his former Idolatry, and continued stedfast in the firm Belief and Practice of that Religion which God had taught him, the principal Article of which was the Unity and Spirituality of the Divine Nature.

I PROCEED now to consider the Term Righteousness often made use of by St. Paul, when he asserts that *Abraham's* Faith was accounted unto him for Righteousness.

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Now this is often intended to denote no more than Justification, or an Acquittance from Sins past; and therefore it is placed to signify not the Act, but the Advantage or Reward of believing in Christ, and thereupon embracing those Terms of Salvation proposed by him in his Gospel. In this Sense then it is evident that it stands in opposition not to the Crime, but to the Punishment of Unbelief or Disobedience, which is evidently *St. Paul's* meaning of it, when he says, *that Abraham's Faith was reckoned unto him for Righteousness*. Now from these Observations, I hope, it clearly appears, that the Term Faith, as used by *St. Paul*, being a firm Persuasion of the Truths contained in the Gospel, this must needs be the first, not only in Time and Order, but also in the Quality of a Foundation; and is qualified to produce every other Christian Virtue, as its proper Fruit and genuine Effects.

INDEED it must be acknowledged that it does not always produce these happy Effects, because through the Corruption of human Nature it is sometimes not a lively but rather a dormant Principle. For there have been many, who in almost all Ages of Christianity have been negligent in exerting its due Force and Efficacy. Nevertheless, where Men duly attend to it, and do not suffer the Motives it makes use of to be

be in any measure obstructed, it never fails to render them in every Respect exemplary Patterns of that Purity and Holiness which the Christian Religion in all its several Doctrines very strongly enforces upon the Minds of its Disciples. The sacred Writers therefore in the Accounts they give us of this Virtue, speak of it, as it is in its own Nature, great, powerful and efficacious, always presuming that those Persons who are possessed of it, will make use of all their Strength to preserve its Impressions as lively and as strong, as they were, when first made upon them. Consequently, where Men are careful to act in this manner, they will experience their Inducements to obey the Precepts of the Gospel to be so powerful, and the Conditions of obtaining them so reasonable and necessary, that an assured Expectation of the former will draw after it a careful Discharge of the latter. It is therefore of the utmost Consequence and Importance that Men be thoroughly established and confirmed in this common Principle of Goodness.

THE whole Duty of a Christian then is very properly comprised under this Article of Faith; since whoever is firmly established in the Truth of the Gospel, must be likewise in the Truth of those Doctrines which it inculcates; the principal of which
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are, that God sent his only-begotten Son to take upon him our Nature, and become Man, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. That as the Son of God hath by his Death upon the Cross abolished the whole Power of Sin, we must therefore kill it in ourselves, by subduing all our inordinate Affections, and endeavoring as far as we are able, to attain perfect Holiness in the Sight of God. That if we be sincere and unwearied in such our Endeavors, God will grant us the Grace of his Holy Spirit to complete and perfect them; that although we may not hitherto have been so regular and constant in our Obedience as we ought to have been, yet if we are unfeignedly sorry for our past Misconduct, and sincerely resolve for the future not to obey Sin in the Lusts thereof; our heavenly Father will then regard us with an Eye of Pity and Compassion, and for the Sake of the unfinning Obedience of his ever Beloved Son, and the Merits of his Death and Sufferings will receive us again into his Favor. But if, notwithstanding all these Assurances, we will, by continuing in Sin, and serving it in the Lusts thereof, trample under foot the Son of God, and count the Blood of the Covenant wherewith we were sanctified

sanctified an unholy Thing, and thereby do despite unto the Spirit of Grace, that then there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to devour the Adversaries. I say, Faith comprehending under it all these Articles, may well be esteemed as the Sum of a Christian's Duty; and they, who after the Example of faithful *Abraham* are properly influenced by it, may likewise with equal Propriety expect to have it with him imputed unto them for Righteousness.

THIS Faith, I assert, all must possess, who from the Heart believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, and becoming Man was qualified to be the Redeemer and Saviour of the World. For they who entertain a hearty Persuasion of this great, this fundamental Truth, must be firmly resolved to enter into Covenant with him, and accept the Terms^{on} which those Advantages are proposed. ^ Of this Nature was the Faith of those first Converts to Christianity made by St. *Peter's* preaching on the Day of *Pentecost*. Of the like Nature was the Faith of the Thief upon the Cross, who though he beheld his Saviour then in the same Situation with himself, yet saw through the Veil which for that Season overshadowed him,

him, acknowledged him for his Redeemer, and begged to be remembered of him when he should come into his Kingdom. In like manner was the Faith of the Eunuch instructed by *Philip*, when he acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God. The same was the Faith of the persecuting *Saul*, who, when converted by a Vision from Heaven, boldly preached Christ crucified, to the unbelieving Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles who perversely withstood the Conviction of their Minds, foolishness; but unto them who are called, *i. e.* willingly and without Prejudice hearken to and obey the Truth, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. This was the Faith of the Roman Centurion *Cornelius*, the Jailor at *Philippi*, and many others left upon sacred Record. For this, generally speaking, is the Faith to which Justification in the Sense I have mentioned above, is attributed as its conditional Cause. This we find always distinguished from, and opposed to Works and the Law, in respect of its being followed by that beneficial Effect, which they were incapable of producing. For such is evidently the meaning of *St. Paul's* Reasoning, as appears from the 21 and 22 verses of the 3d chap. of his Epistle to the Galatians, and many other Texts of equal Importance

ance in other of his Epistles ; so especially in that Part of his Sermon to the Men of *Antioch* recorded by St. *Luke* in the 13th chap. of his Acts of the Apostles, 38, 39 verses, where he says, *Be it known unto you therefore, that through this Man is preached unto you the Forgiveness of Sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all Things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.* Having thus shewn you, as I intended, the Expediency of Faith to the procuring in us true and sincere Obedience, I have now only one Point remaining for me to prove, and then to conclude all I have to say upon this Subject ; which is, to shew you, that the Articles of our Church preach the same Doctrine ; but this I refer to my next Letter.

In the mean Time,

TOPCROFT,
Jan. 27, 1766.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER VI.

THE

DOCTRINE

ASSERTED IN THE

FOREGOING LETTERS

AGREEABLE TO THE

ARTICLES OF OUR CHURCH.

DEAR SIR,

IN my last Letter I promised you that I would in my next Endeavor to prove to you, that the Doctrine which I had asserted in my foregoing Letters was the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, as expressed in her Articles; the clearing of which therefore is the Design of my present Letter, with which I shall beg leave to conclude this Subject. In the Prosecution of this Argument, I shall first produce each Article that relates to this Subject by itself; and then endeavor to shew you, that what I have asserted is agreeable thereto.

ARTI-

ARTICLE II. Of the Justification of Man. " We are accounted righteous before God, only FOR the Merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ BY Faith, and not FOR our own Works or Deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of Comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification." Now the Thing intended to be here fixed is the meritorious Cause, or that FOR which we are justified; and it is disowned of our Works, or that we are justified FOR them. But then it is not said that Faith is that Cause, or that we are justified FOR Faith : No—but only FOR the Merits of our LORD—what is opposed to our own Works, are the Merits of our Redeemer, and we are justified FOR his Merits by Faith. His Merits are the Cause, and Faith the Medium ; but this excludes not Works, in any other respect than as a meritorious Cause, on the contrary, without Works Faith is dead. Now as, FOR his Merits we must be justified, and not for any Merits in our own Works ; therefore to be justified, we must not trust in our own Works, but must have Faith in his Merits, whereby we are justified.—Thus is it that we are justified by Faith only, not to the Exclusion of Works, but to the Ex-

clusion of any Trust in their Merit—Works must however coexist with our Faith, for as has been said, *Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead being alone*, 1 James ii. 17. The next Article or the 12th, speaks fully to this Effect.

ARTICLE 12. Of Good Works. “Albeit that Good Works, which are the Fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our Sins, and endure the Severity of God’s Judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith, insomuch, that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a Tree discerned by the Fruit.”
—That Good Works are not meritorious is very evident to any one in the least conversant with Revelation and the sacred Writings; but then from these same Writings it is as clear, that they are pleasing to God, and accepted through Christ.
—This St. Paul himself asserts in his Epistle to the Ephesians, ii. 10. *For we are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto Good Works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* By the Fall of our first Parents, we lost the Perfection of our Nature, therefore our best Actions must necessarily be very imperfect, and consequently are by no means capable

capable of enduring the Severity of God's Judgment, much less make an Atonement for our Sins, since they themselves stand in need of an Expiation being made for them through the Blood of Christ: But him has God ordained to be the Mediator of eternal Life, that they who through Faith in him produce Fruit unto Holiness, shall for the Sake of his Merits be rendered capable of inheriting eternal Happiness.

Now I am not conscious to myself that in any of my former Letters I have asserted any Thing that contradicts this Doctrine, or that is repugnant to this Article of our Church. For it never was my Design, and consequently I could never attempt to prove, that Good Works could of themselves avail to the putting away the Filth of the Flesh, as the Apostle expresses it, or that we should by Virtue of them alone, without any Reliance upon the Merits of Christ's Death and Sufferings, be able to endure the Severity of God's Judgment. The whole of what I have here asserted, is, that Faith upon the Merits of Christ, unless it be accompanied with Good Works, will not alone be sufficient to obtain from the Hands of God our Justification unto Life, since the one are declared to be as much the Condition of the Gospel-Covenant, as the other.

They are both of equal Value in the Sight of God, therefore equally pleasing to him, and the latter are as necessary to the Perfection of Faith, or its being a true and living Faith, as the bringing forth Fruit is to the Perfection of a Tree.

ARTICLE 13. Of Works before Justification. “ Works done before the Grace of Christ and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of Faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make Men meet to receive Grace, or, as the School Authors say, deserve Grace of Congruity : yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the Nature of Sin.” — The Sense of this Article I take to be this ; that in order to render the Actions of Men perfectly good, it is necessary that they proceed from a good Principle, *viz.* Faith, and that they likewise tend to a good End, *viz.* the Glory of God, and that there be not the least Deficiency in any one of these Respects. But then who is there amongst either the Sons or Daughters of Mankind, that can lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and declare that they have neither in Thought, Word or Deed, transgressed against the Commandments of God, even after they may have been supposed to have partook

partook of the Grace of Christ our Saviour : therefore how specious soever our good Actions may appear, they can of themselves be entitled to no Merit, on account of their Imperfection, consequently without the Merits of Christ being first imputed, will never be able of themselves to bring us into the Presence of God. Agreeable to which the Apostle says, Titus iii. 5. *Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saved us by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost :* and again, Romans iv. 2. *If Abraham were justified by Works, he hath whereof to Glory, but not before God.* 6. *Even as David also describeth the Blessedness of the Man unto whom God imputeth Righteousness without Works.* And of himself he thus speaks, though he was at that time an Apostle of Christ. chap. vii. 18. *I know that in me, that is in my Flesh dwelleth no good Thing.* He therefore in the next chapter draws this Conclusion, that they that are in the Flesh cannot please God.

Now in any of the foregoing Letters I am not sensible of having asserted any Doctrine contrary to that which is contained in this Article of our Church. I never disallowed the Principle from which all our Actions ought to flow, in order to render them

them acceptable in the Sight of God ; *viz.* Faith in him, and a firm Belief of his Promises in Christ Jesus. But as this Principle will by no means avail towards purifying the Heart, without the Grace of God co-operating with it, it consequently follows, that all our Works performed without the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, must be so far from having any Virtue in them, that they must in their own Nature be evil. But then, unless there be in us a Mind disposed to hearken to the Influences of God's Grace, we shall be by no means qualified to partake of it. For God has no where in Scripture, that I can find, promised to bestow it upon us indiscriminately, and to save us by his Grace, without our making use at the same time of the means necessary to accomplish the same. Many, I know, are apt to think, from the Case of the Thief upon the Cross, that when God has predetermined a Man to be saved, as they are pleased to term it, he will then bestow such a Measure of his Grace, as that he shall not be able to withstand its Force. But no such Conclusion can, I think, ever be drawn from this Instance. For let us consider the whole of this very remarkable Transaction. This Man then acknowledged our Lord to be the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, at
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the very Time when his Enemies were insulting over him as an Impostor; when even one of his own Disciples had just betrayed him, another had positively denied knowing him; and all of them, tho' they had for some time been the Companions of his Discourses and Miracles, had yet now in his greatest Danger forsaken him, and were fled; when they, who once firmly believed it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel, did now despair of him, and give him up together with their Faith for lost. This extraordinary Faith, and modest Behaviour suitable thereto, did argue a Temper of itself so ingenuous, so well disposed for Conviction, that it is by no means to be wondered at, that God should then communicate the Assistance of his Grace so very liberally, as wholly to complete his Repentance, and thereby entitle him to that glorious Promise of being that Day with his Redeemer in Paradise. For, had he hardened himself as the Rulers and chief Priests amongst the Jews did, or as the other Thief, the Partner in his temporal Punishment had done, and joined him and them in reviling and blaspheming his Saviour, God would not then, we may be sure, have bestowed his Grace upon him, but would, as he did those abandoned Wretches, have permitted him to have abided

abided the miserable Effects of such his Folly and Impiety. Therefore though we cannot merely of ourselves do any thing that shall be acceptable in the Sight of God, and whatever we do of that Nature, must be ascribed to the Grace of God co-operating with us; yet at the same time, I think, it must be granted, both from the Instance just now mentioned, and many others in Scripture of a like Nature, that God requires of us, in order to qualify us to receive his Grace, that we bring with us Minds tractable and well disposed, always ready to hearken to his Holy Suggestions, and to obey and submit to the Influences of his Grace over us. Which Doctrine, I think, is very agreeable to the 10th Article of our Church, concerning Free-Will. “The Condition of Man after the Fall of *Adam*, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural Strength and Good-Works to Faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no Power to do Good-Works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the Grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good Will, and working with us, when we have this good Will. The Sense and Meaning of which I take to be this, that when God created Man, he made him perfect in his kind, and therefore with a Will
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entirely at Liberty to choose either Good or Evil. But when Man lost his Innocence by transgressing the Divine Command, he forfeited that Power of Election and Choice which he had before enjoyed, ceased to be free with regard to Good, therefore became the Slave and Servant of Sin: the Consequence of which is, that his Understanding is blinded, his Will become perverse, and his Passions and Appetites so impetuous, that when left entirely to himself, he is incapable of either discerning or choosing those Things which are in their own Nature good, but is carried away to follow those Things which are the direct opposites of the former. The Apostle therefore says, Romans viii. 8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* From hence then it appears that all Men stand in need of the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable them to choose as well as perform what is good and acceptable to God; which, as it is the most excellent Gift the Divine Mercy can bestow upon us his fallen Creatures, and which he likewise gives out of his own free Bounty and loving-kindness, it is by way of Eminence called Grace, in order thereby to distinguish its Excellency with regard to us, beyond every other Favor the Almighty can confer upon us. This every
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one may experience the happy and most blessed Effects of, who is careful to improve it when bestowed, and to bring a Mind suitable to receive it; for this will never be wanting to any Man, who is not first wanting to himself. Having thus endeavored to shew you that the Doctrine maintained in the foregoing Letters, is not only agreeable to Scripture, but likewise by no means contradictory to the Articles of our Church, I shall here beg leave to close the Subject. If what has been said, shall tend to establish you or any other of my Brethren, who may through the Frailty of human Nature have been wandering in the wide and dangerous Labyrinth of Error, in the Truth as it is in Christ, I shall by no means think the time spent in the drawing up those Letters, unprofitably bestowed; but shall be thankful to God for inclining me thus to employ the Talent he has committed to my Charge. I will not any longer trespass upon your Patience, but will conclude the whole with praying the Almighty, that you, myself, and every other Disciple of Christ may always have our Minds so well disposed to receive his Grace, and when made Partakers of it, with Care to improve it, that he may never have occasion, either through our Wilfulness or Negligence to withdraw it from us; but
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that at last through its blessed Influence we may become Christians both in Will and Deed, true Israelites, in whom shall be found no Guile. Which happy Effect God of his infinite Mercy grant for Jesus Christ his Sake, our most Blessed Redeemer and Saviour.

I am,

Dear Sir,

TOPCROFT, Your affectionate
March 31, 1766. Friend and Brother,
JOHN FRANCIS.

F I N I S.



*A proper and due Subjection to Authority
enforced:*

IN A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
LENT ASSIZES

HELD AT
T H E T F O R D

IN THE
County of *N O R F O L K*,

On *Saturday* the 15th Day of *March*, 1766,

BEFORE THE HONORABLE
Sir *RICHARD ADAMS*, Knight,

ONE OF THE
BARONS in the Court of EXCHEQUER.

3 F R M O N

LEVY 122112

1875

ROMANS XIII. 3.

For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have Praise of the same.

ST. Paul, in the first Part of this Chapter, out of which the Words now read to you are taken, enforces to his Christian Converts at *Rome* the Doctrine of Subjection to the higher Powers by a Submission to their Authority, and an Obedience to their Laws. Let every Soul, says he, *be subject unto the higher Powers*. He then proceeds to give the Reason for laying down this Precept; both from its Divine Institution, and its Necessity, since without such a Subjection, there could be no such Thing as Order and Regularity to be observed in the World; as then the stronger and more powerful would quickly oppress, if not entirely crush their weaker Brethren,

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the fatal Consequence of which would be a total Anarchy and Confusion. Now, in order to remove the Dread such a Superiority might have over their Minds, he informs them in what manner they should proceed to cause this Designation of Authority to turn out to their Advantage and Comfort, viz. by conforming their Actions to the Commands of God. For he assures them in the Words of my Text, *That Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have Praise of the same.*

FORM these Words of the Apostle thus explained, I shall beg leave to shew you the Advantage of an uniform Obedience in all the several Actions of our Lives under which must be comprehended Obedience to Government; then enforce the Necessity of it, and conclude with informing you, what a Guilt you will bring upon your Souls, by resisting Authority in the Execution of its lawful Designs. *For there is no Powers but of God; the Powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; the Consequence of the whole of which Proceeding will be, that they that resist, shall receive to themselves Damnation.* To enjoy the Protection of Government, and entitle
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ourselves to its Praise and Commendation, it is necessary that we pay a chearful Obedience to those Laws which it has or shall enact for the good or benefit of Society, such as tend to promote the Interests of Piety and Virtue, by endeavoring to instil into Mens Minds the Principles of Religion, and obliging the idle and dissolute to earn their Maintenance by industrious Labor; which in other Words amounts to no more, than our conforming ourselves to the Precepts of the Gospel of Christ, which were calculated to serve that very End and Purpose. Now no Man will pretend to be a Disciple of Christ, unless he will obey the Precepts his Blessed Master has enjoined him? And in case he should, what Advantage will his being a nominal Christian bring him? Does he think that our Lord will own such an one at the last Day to be his Servant? Will he then, think ye, receive such an one into Glory, because he had the good Fortune by being born in a Christian Country, to have been baptized in his Name? If nothing more than such a bare Profession was required, what Necessity was there that our Saviour should have set us an Example of unfinning Obedience, if we were not bound to follow it, as far as frail human Nature can imitate Divine Perfections? But what does our

Blessed Lord himself say to all such Pretenders to Piety and Goodness, to such *Judas's*, as thus again as it were to betray him with a Kiss; *Many*, says our Divine Instructor, *will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name have done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work Iniquity; for not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father, who is in Heaven.*

BESIDES, let us consider the Nature of the Gospel-Duties, and their Tendency to the promoting the Peace and Happiness of Mankind even in this Life, and which will certainly secure our everlasting Welfare.

To begin then with our Duty towards God. Our Blessed Saviour assures us, that the first of all the Commandments consists in the Belief of one God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the World; and that such a Belief must manifest itself in loving him with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Mind, and with all our Strength. This is the Foundation of all Religion, natural as well as revealed, the Effect of which will be, *that we shall love our Neighbor as ourselves*, that being
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the 2d like unto it. Now by loving God in the manner here required, we shall dread nothing so much as his Displeasure, consequently we shall fear God; we shall be particularly careful to honor his holy Word, and pay all due Regard to the Revelations of his Will, so that like the *Bereans*, mentioned by *St. Luke*, *we shall receive the Word with all Readiness of Mind, and search the Scriptures daily, whether these Things are so.* This therefore will prove the strongest Antidote to all Infidelity. It will likewise establish our Hope, which is a strong Reliance and Dependance upon the Truth and Goodness of God, for his Performance of those Things which he has promised. So that this, which is the proper Effect of Faith, is a peculiar Homage to God upon the Foot of his infallible Truth, that he can neither be mistaken himself, nor is under any Temptation to deceive us. This properly grounded will guard us against those pernicious Extremes, Presumption and Despair. Of the former we are guilty, when we neglect those means of Grace, which are established in order to enable us to perform our Duty, and rashly run ourselves into Temptations, presuming upon our own Strength to encounter them. Of the latter, when we are so overwhelmed with the weight of our Sins, as to mistrust

the Mercy of God, and impiously imagine the Merits of Christ's Death a Sacrifice not sufficient to atone for the Sins of Mankind and satisfy the Divine Justice. It will likewise in all our Wants and Dangers cause us to put our whole Trust in him, whereby we declare our constant Dependence upon God for the Relief of all our Wants, whether spiritual or temporal, and of his being able to support us under all our Afflictions and Temptations. These Considerations will finally beget in us that Humility and Lowliness of Mind, which will cause us to resign our Wills to God's, never to presume upon any fancied Righteousness we may have performed, or arrogantly boast of it, but with the humble Publican mentioned in the Gospel to cry out in the deepest Contrition of Heart, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*. Never to repine at any of God's Dispensations, but whatever Afflictions shall befall us, with Patience and Resignation receive them, being ever ready to join with good old *Eli* in declaring, *that it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. And will not, think you, such a pious and good Disposition as this be a means of procuring us that Happiness, which consists in a well disposed Mind, in the consciousness of our having performed our Duty to God, and thereby

thereby being assured of having made him our Friend ; the Excellency of which consists in being approved of by *him*, who is infinite Goodness and Wisdom itself. This is a Happiness, which as the World cannot give, so neither can it take away.

I PROCEED now to consider wherein consists the Love of our Neighbor. The first and principal Duty of which is contained in Obedience to Government ; *i. e. in submitting ourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake, whether it be to the King, as supreme, or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.* Upon the punctual Observance of this Precept depends that good Order and Regularity in Government, which is so essential to the Preservation of Society, that without it all mutual Inter-course and Fellowship with each other would quickly be destroyed, and nothing but Anarchy and Confusion be found in the World. Without Government, those lesser Societies, such as Cities, Bodies corporate, nay, even Families could not subsist. For take away Authority from Governors, and we shall find that Children will soon follow the Example, and refuse their Parents that Obedience, which God and Nature require and expect from them :

Servants likewise will become refractory and contumacious, ever ready to dispute their Masters lawful Commands, defraud and cheat them without any Check or Restraint, and if not obliged in their unreasonable Demands, will sometimes proceed to such Violence, as even to imbrue their Hands in their Blood : and that this is no imaginary Scene of Things, drawn, as some perhaps may be willing to think, to terrify and alarm you, the Annals of History of all Ages and Nations will sufficiently prove; so necessary we see it is for the Preservation of Society, that all due Reverence should be paid to those who are set in Authority over us. As Duty is thus due to the Civil Magistrate, so likewise is Reverence to be paid to our spiritual Pastors and Teachers, as they are Ambassadors of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. We should therefore pay all proper Attention to their Precepts and Admonitions, considering that they watch for our Souls, as they that must give an Account, that they may do it with Joy and not with Grief, for that is unprofitable for us. Our Duty towards our Neighbor likewise requires of us, that we do no Wrong or Injury to any one, but that we give every Man is due: That we defame no one; that we do not that to our Neighbor, which
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all Circumstances considered, we should be unwilling to have done to ourselves. That we be kind and charitable, according to our Abilities, to every Person in Distress; and when Acts of Benevolence are to be performed, esteeming every Man our Brother, of what Nation, or Country or Religion soever he be. That we be ready to forgive any Injury that may have been done us, as we expect Forgiveness of our Offences at God's Hand. In fine we are forbidden to covet any Thing that may tend to our Neighbor's Detriment, or what of right belongs to him. This is the Sum of the Christian Law, as far as it relates to our Neighbor, which when duly performed, procures Love, Friendship and good Neighborhood, and is of such universal Benefit to Society, as to render that People, who are actuated and governed by it, truly blessed and happy.

THESE Duties thus properly observed, will be the sure means to preserve us from neglecting those that respect ourselves. For he, who is ever entertaining in his Thoughts the immense Distance there is between him and his Creator, will be apt to join with the good old Patriarch in acknowledging that he is not worthy of the least of all God's Mercies: but when he shall come to reflect that Sin has reduced him to a
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State worse than nothing, without the Mercies of God and the Merits of our Blessed Saviour, how much it cause him to join with Holy *David* in that devout Litany, *Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great Goodness.* The Man, who from a just Sense of his Duty to God is thus meek and humble, will ever be ready to obey his Superiors in all things just and lawful; in submitting to the Authority even of the froward and unworthy; never despising their Persons, exposing their Weaknesses, or insulting over their Infirmities. True Humility will make him affable and courteous to his Neighbor, though his inferior; if his equal, candid and ready to maintain Peace and Amity with him, if his superior, respectful and submissive. This meek and humble Man then will never pride himself upon the goods of Nature, Fortune, or of Grace, but will always acknowledge them as the Gifts of the free Bounty and Mercy of God. He will always be contented with the Station God has allotted him, though it be never so disagreeable and distasteful to him, as being well assured that the Promise of God by his Apostle to all such well disposed Persons is unshaken, I will never leave you nor forsake you. A Man of this pious turn of Mind will never be guilty of those Vices, which, tho' the present

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present Age may reckon fashionable, will yet draw a Man's Soul into the Pit of Perdition ; but will by Chastity and Sobriety endeavor to obtain such a mastery over his Passions, as will at length enable him thro' the divine Assistance, which will never be wanting upon such Occasions, with *Joseph* to resist all such Temptations upon this noble and truly pious Principle, how can I do this great Wickedness and Sin against God.

AND now from this sketch, imperfect as I am sensible it is, of the great and substantial Advantages arising to us from being thus punctual in our Duty towards God, our Neighbor and ourselves, few Arguments, I should hope, would be necessary to enforce the necessity we are under of putting them in Practice. Out of the many therefore that there are for this Purpose, I shall beg leave to make use only of this, that the Vices opposite to the Virtues I have here mentioned, though for the present they may afford us a short temporary Pleasure, will most certainly in the end terminate in our everlasting Ruin. Many, I am very sensible there are, who, thinking that an eternal Punishment for temporary Crimes bears no Proportion to each other, and is therefore incompatible with the Justice of God, have asserted that the Divine Justice will be satisfied with a
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less Punishment, and that the supreme Being will never condemn Man eternally, for what through the Frailty of his Nature, he was almost incapacitated to preserve himself from. Now however specious this Argument may at first sight appear to us, (as we are apt to think it) from indulging ourselves in the Pleasures of Sin for a Season, yet I should hope a few Words would suffice to shew the Falsity of it in both respects. When Men indulge themselves in Sin, their Souls thereby contract such a Pollution, as is too apt to vitiate their just Notions of Things ; the Consequence of which will be, that they will become utterly unable to receive any Pleasure or Satisfaction from any thing but what tends to the gratification of their Senses. To be admitted then into such a Place and amongst such a Society, as will admit of no opportunity for such a gratification, cannot be the means of procuring any Happiness, but must terminate in the Prospect of certain Misery. For let us a little consider in what will consist the Happiness of good Men after Death. Now the Scriptures inform us, that this will be in the Fruition of the Almighty, i. e. in endeavoring to resemble him in his Divine Perfections ; in being pure, as he is pure, holy as he is holy, merciful as he is merciful, just

just as he is just, and taking a Pleasure in Truth, as being one of the essential Attributes of the Divine Nature. If these then be the Joys of Heaven, as God, who cannot lie, has in the Divine Revelations of his Will, most firmly assured us they are, and that this Life is the Time appointed by him, who is to be our Judge at the last Day, in order to qualify us to partake of them, pray, let me ask the voluptuous, unjust, implacable and profane Man, who has neglected the Opportunity afforded him of acquiring such a Disposition as is necessary towards attaining these several Graces or Virtue, indulged himself in all the evil and corrupt Imaginations of his Heart, and with Contempt has refused to hearken to all Holy Suggestions of Grace, whether he can think himself unjustly dealt by, when he comes to reflect Seriously upon his Condition, that God should deprive him of that Happiness, which he would never take the least Pains to render himself a worthy partaker of. Then as to its being Eternal, the Objection against that is easily removed; for first, as by his Crimes he has offended against infinite Justice, for that Justice to be satisfied, it is necessary that infinite or eternal Punishment should ensue, and it is impossible that they should
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be infinite in any other Respect than their Duration, however they may admit an Encrease. Secondly, of this particular Circumstance it was absurd for him to plead Ignorance; and then thirdly, if he thinks the Almighty under a Necessity, as it were, to fulfil his Promise with regard to eternal Happiness, it must also be equally necessary with respect to an endless Punishment, since to suppose the contrary, would affect both equally alike, and we should then have no more Reason to promise ourselves the one, than to dread the other. These Argument duly considered and reflected on, must, I should hope, have such an Effect, as to convince us all of the Necessity we are under of becoming true Israelites, in whom there is no Guile, if we be at all desirous of securing a Mansion in the New Jerusalem.

HAVING thus shewn the Necessity we all lie under of performing an impartial Obedience to all the Divine Commands, if we would attain Eternal Life, it of Course follows, that to resist the Powers that are ordained of God, must be such an Affront to the Sovereign Power of the Almighty, as must needs render those who are guilty of it, obnoxious to the Penalty annexed to such a Transgression, viz. Eternal Damnation. This will appear still
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more evident, if we consider the chief End for which God may be supposed to have instituted Government, viz. the Maintenance of true Piety and Virtue in the World. And that this was one principal End the Almighty had in View in thus Establishing Government amongst Mankind, seems to be very strongly implied from the Words of *St. Paul* in my Text, *that Rulers are not a Terror to Good Works, but to the Evil*; if we will not then be afraid of the Power, let us do that which is good, and we shall have Praise of the same.

If then we oppose our Governors in the Execution of their lawful Authority, let us a little reflect, whether by such a Proceeding we shall not in the End be found to be opposing of God, which but to think of, must surely cause every Serious and truly Pious Heart to tremble. And why should you resist Authority? If you lead Lives conformable to the Laws, which as I have proved above, are agreeable to the Precepts of the Gospel of Christ, you are under their Countenance and Protection? Is it not Madness then to oppose that which is to secure you in the Peaceable Enjoyment of your Civil and Religious Rights and Liberties, which if subverted by your forcible Opposition, will leave you
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defenceless to the lawless Attacks of the Spoiler and Murderer. And if the Laws be not put in Execution against those Disturbers of Society, whom gentler Methods would not keep in Subjection, what must be the Consequence, but that a false and misguided Pity shewn to these, will prove a very unjust Cruelty to those whose Lives and Actions are both the Ornament and Defence of every well governed State.

THESE Arguments in behalf of Government, I thought a Subject by no Means improper to enforce upon your Minds at this Season, when the Government summons us to take Cognizance of those Irregularities that may have been committed in the Community, and to punish Offenders; and not only so, but likewise to admonish you not to be led away in the same Error, by which some of your unfortunate Countrymen in a neighbouring County were last Year seduced, and on that Account were stirred up to oppose in a very riotous and tumultuous Manner, the erecting those Houses of Industry which our Government has thought proper to appoint, in order to ease in some Measure the Industrious Farmer of the great weight that at present lays upon him in maintaining the Poor, and that the Poor themselves

selves might be better taken care of, and more comfortably supported than they are at present. Yet this salutary Scheme, has, thro' a wrong Construction, and the malicious and false Insinuations of ill designing Men, been esteemed not only by the poorer Sort of People, but even by many of the Farmers themselves, as an Infringement upon the Liberty of the Subject, and a Means to enslave the greatest Part of the Nation.

BUT I beg you to permit me, before you give entire Credit to such idle Stories, to explain to you the Nature of these Industrious Houses, that so you may avoid that fatal Rock, on which so many of your Neighbors have suffered Shipwreck, and who will shortly be called upon by their Governors to answer for such their riotous Proceedings. Now the Intention of these Houses of Industry, as appears by the Act of Parliament, is to maintain in a decent and frugal Manner our poorer Brethren. Those, who are entirely past their Labor, thro' the Infirmities of either Age or Diseases, to have such Care taken of them, as both Humanity and the Law of Christ, will oblige us to. It will be expected indeed of the Younger Sort, who are in Health and Vigor, that they should do their Endeavors to earn a Maintenance,

H

which

which shall then be allowed them in a plentiful Manner ; and Children will have the Happiness, by a proper Education, of being instructed in the Knowledge of their Duty towards God, their Neighbor and themselves, which is now most sadly neglected amongst our poorer Brethren, and indeed cannot well be avoided on account of their unhappy Circumstances. The profligate and abandoned will likewise be punished ; but so they are now when detected, and for the Benefit of Society it were to be wished, that they could be oftner than they are. But if they will be Industrious, Regular, Sober, Obedient and Religious, they will find that their Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil ; if they will not then be afraid of the Power, let them do good, and they shall have Praise of the same.

BESIDES, let them reflect that if they will use their utmost Endeavors to maintain themselves, then that they will not be obliged to come into these Houses ; but, if sooner than do that they will insist upon a Parishes maintaining them, I can see no Reason they can have of Complaint, if Parishes join to render that Burden more tolerable, which is now indeed become almost insupportable. Far be it from me to countenance from this sacred Place, and
before

before so respectable an Audience, any thing that shall tend to oppress the Poor. But then I think it my Duty and agreeable to the Office I here sustain, rightly to inform you of the Nature of that Institution, which is really calculated as well for your Benefit, as for the Redress of your Neighbors.

To conclude; let us all in our several Stations mutually endeavor to befriend each other; let us act honestly and candidly by every one, and let both Rich and Poor equally join in assisting the impartial Distribution of Justice, and by a strict Conformity to the Precepts of the Gospel, let us endeavor to draw down the Divine Blessing upon all our lawful and honest Undertakings; then shall we have no Reason to dread here the Punishment of our temporal Rulers, nor yet in the last Scene of our Lives depart off this Stage with the fearful Expectation of receiving that Sentence from our justly incensed Judge, *Go ye cursed into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels;* but that we may be found in the Number of those Blessed Spirits, whom their Merciful Saviour shall meet with this gracious Welcome, *Well done ye Good and Faithful Servants, ye have been Faithful over a few Things, I will make you Rulers over many*
H 2 *Things,*

Things, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord.
May God of his infinite Mercy grant to be the Lot of all who hear me this Day, for the Sake and Merits of the same Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ, to which Father and Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Three in the ever Blessed and undivided Unity, be ascribed, as is most justly due, of us all Men, all Love, Honor and Obedience, Dominion and Power, Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, both now, and through succeeding Periods of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*



*Religion the truest and best Bulwark of a
Nation:*

A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AT THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH,
AT
N O R W I C H,

On *Tuesday* in the ASSIZE-WEEK, *July 29, 1766.*

BEFORE THE RIGHT HONORABLE

Sir *THOMAS PARKER*, Knt.

Lord chief BARON in the Court of EXCHEQUER.

AND THE HONORABLE

Sir *SIDNEY STAFFORD SMYTHE*, Knt.

One of the BARONS of the same COURT,

Right Honorable Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter of the 11th inst.

ST. R. L. O. A.

RECEIVED AT THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH

10 R. L. O. A.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,

ALFRED A. [illegible]

[illegible]

1882

ST. R. L. O. A.

10 R. L. O. A.

PROVERBS, XIV. 34.

*Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is
a Reproach to any People.*

AS the Honor and Happiness of a Nation in general reflect for the most Part a degree of both upon every particular Member of it, it is doubtless every one's Interest as well as his Duty to contribute all he can to the procuring and preserving to his Country those Blessings. To this Motive amongst others, were those many Instances owing, which the History of all Nations furnishes with. For tho' there may seem from the Accounts of some Historians, to have been Men of such brave and generous Spirits, as to have had no self interested View in all that they did, yet if we allow them to have been moved in some Measure to those noble Exploits recorded of them, by the Glory, the Applause and Renown, which generally followed such Actions, we cannot say they

were wholly disinterested ; for Glory when accompanied with a good Conscience, is certainly the greatest Blessing a Man is capable of in this Life ; 'tis the most valuable of all the Objects of Human Desire ; 'tis what the Philosophers call a Divine Thing, the best of all outward Goods, the most honest Fruit and largest Reward of Virtue ; 'tis that in fine which the unerring Wisdom of God declares to be better than all other earthly Things, and proposes as a Reward and Encouragement to Goodness. We do not therefore in the least derogate from the Merit of those renowned Persons, whose Industry has been stirred up, whose Courage has been influenced, and whose Constancy has been supported in the Prosecution of worthy Enterprizes for the Publick Good, by the Honor and Glory they should gain thereby, since that is what the common Apprehensions of Men, the plainest Dictates of Reason, the Judgments of the wisest Scholars, and even God himself commend unto us as a most precious and considerable Blessing.

Now among all the ways whereby a Nation may be rendered Great and Noble, may be exalted with Glory, and blessed with Prosperity, there is none more conducive to those excellent Ends and Purposes

poses than the Encouragement and Practice of true Religion, since that tends in its own Nature to procure those Blessings, and indeed secures them to it, by drawing down upon it and engaging the Favor and Protection of God himself. Now if those wise Heathens, we just now mentioned, were induced to procure for their Country all the Benefits and Advantages they could, by the Glory and Honor they should gain thereby, and we greatly Value them on that Account; how much greater Reason have we to Honor and Esteem our most gracious Sovereign, whose Regard for this is Native Country is actuated by the most noble Principle of all, viz. the Honor and Glory of God, which he is giving us most convincing Proofs, as well by his own Piety and Virtue, as likewise by the Care he is always taking to promote and establish the same amongst his Subjects, by having made so prudent a choice of Men, whose Office it is to see that the Laws relating thereto are duly put in Execution amongst us, whose Lives and Examples reflect an Honor upon that high and important Office they sustain. Add to all this, that he never Protects or endeavor to Screen any, tho' of the first Rank and Order amongst us, who shall by any flagrant Crime or Misdemeanor incur a Breach of them, where-

whereby he discountenances to the utmost of his Power, all Vice and Immortality, Prophaness and Debauchery in every Person of what Rank or Condition soever; by which means he encourages as far as lies in his Power, every thing that tends to the Encrease and Establishment of true Religion and Virtue. How happy may we then reckon ourselves to be under the Government of such a Wise and Pious Prince, and ought therefore most sincerely to beg of the Almighty that he would be pleased to preserve his Precious Life, so that we may long enjoy this most inestimable Blessing; and we may hope that God will lend a favorable Ear to our Petitions, if we will, in Imitation of the Royal Example, endeavor to promote by our own Lives and Conversations, true Piety and Goodness. For we may assure ourselves that that will be the only way to continue his Favor towards us; for as Solomon in my Text assures us, so we shall find it true, in Experience; *that Righteousness, or in other Words, Religion alone it is that exalteth a Nation, but Sin is the Reproach, and will therefore sooner or later be the Ruin and Destruction of any People.* Upon this Consideration, let us take a View of the Christian Religion (for that I hope in a Christian Audience

dience I may be allowed to call the true Religion) and see how useful all the Virtues it enjoineeth are, to preserve a Nation in a quiet and flourishing State, and how necessary towards the Maintenance of publick Order and Traffic, upon which that depends.

Now most of the Disorders that happen in any Community arise chiefly from Men of restless and turbulent Spirits, from Men who regard nothing but their own private Interests, whose Passions are under no restraint or controul, and who therefore think themselves under no other Obligations to the observance of Justice and Humanity, than what their own Humors and Dispositions incline them to. But the Christian Religion informs such Persons, how fatally they are mistaken: That recommends upon the strongest Motives and Arguments a meek and quiet Temper, a just regard to the Publick Good. That assures them that they will in the End find it their truest Interest to be quiet and orderly in their Stations, diligent in their Callings, sincere in their Words, upright in their Dealings, affectionate to their Relations, respectful and obedient to their Superiors, and affable to their Equals and Inferiors. That informs them how much it will conduce to their Advantage and Satisfaction

faction to root out of their Hearts all Spite and Rancour, all Envy and ill Nature, all Pride and Haughtiness, and all Evil Suspicion and Jealousy. What a vast Number of Evils and Inconveniences they will avoid by restraining their Tongues from all Slander, Detraction and Reviling, all bitter and harsh Language. That most Wise Dispensation engageth Men to be of a Liberal Spirit, and to prefer the Public Good before any private Convenience, before their own Opinion and Humor, their Credit or Reputation, their Profit or Advantage, their Ease or Pleasure. The Christian Religion in short commandeth Men to restrain their Appetites, to be temperate in all their Enjoyments, to obtain from all irregular Pleasures, which may corrupt their Minds, enervate their Understandings, impair their Healths, waste their Estates, stain their Reputations, or prejudice their Peace or Repose. That raises their Minds from the fading Glories and the vanishing Delights of this World, and fixes their Thoughts, their Desires, their Endeavors upon Objects most worthy of them, Objects High and Heavenly, Pure and Spiritual, and which will for ever be the same.

AND shall we not then do all we can to support and establish this Religion,
which

which tends so much to secure the Peace and Happiness of our Nation? Wicked and designing Men will be always Endeavoring to rob us of that most inestimable Treasure and strongest Bulwark of Society. Our Foreign Enemies will see with Pleasure such their pernicious Projects meet with Success, and will aid and assist them in such their Undertakings, as well knowing that nothing is more easy than to destroy a People, when they have once parted with that which is their firmest Basis and Support. If we search the Monuments of former Ages, and consider the strange Revolutions which have happened in the mighty Empires and Kingdoms of the World, we shall find no one Circumstance more considerable than this, that those Nations by which others were subdued, have been remarkable for nothing so much, as for the Virtues opposite to the most prevailing Vices amongst those who were overcome by them. Thus when the *Chaldean* Monarch fell, the *Persians* who conquered them, were eminent for nothing more than their great Temperance and Frugality, while the *Babylonians* perished thro' their Luxury and Effeminacy. When afterwards the *Persian* Monarchy degenerated into the same Vices, they fell under the Power of the *Macedonians*

donians, because they were at that Time more Free than any other People from those softning and destroying Vices, and when the *Persian* Luxury had infected their Conquerors, the severe Discipline and Virtue of the *Romans* made them more Successful in subduing the remaining Parts of the *Grecian* Empire, than either their Numbers or Courage could; and when the *Romans* themselves fell into as great a degeneracy of Manners, as any we ever read of, they became an easy Prey to the *Goths* and *Vandals*, who had neither Practice nor Skill in Military Affairs, but were rude and unexperienced, and who had been held in the utmost Contempt by those very Persons they subdued. What then was the Reason of such their surprising Success? Why *Salvian* informs us (who lived in those Times, and knew and wrote against their Manners and Immoralities with all imaginable Strength and Elegancy) that it was owing to the very severe Chastity of the *Goths* and *Vandals*, among whom Fornication was severely punished, and Adultery was a Crime scarce heard of; whereas all manner of Uncleannefs and Licentiousness did abound among the *Romans*. But was there no other Cause of all these Evils; yes there was one (which I wish to God there was no Reason to reproach

reproach us with) they were indeed called Christians as well as we, but they were fallen into that Degree of Irreligion and Atheism, that nothing was more common among them then to ridicule and scoff at Religion. 'Twas such their Prophaneness that opened the Breach and let in that Deluge that overflowed them; 'twas this that gave Strength to their Enemies Arms, who were Devout and Pious, who acknowledged a Divine Providence, made their solemn Supplications to God before their Victories, and returned to him, to whom it alone was due, the Praise of them afterwards.

THE present Enemies of our Religion pretend indeed to be great Patrons of Morality, and would have us believe that their Disputes about the Meaning of the Christian Doctrines cannot have any bad Effect with Relation to that. But surely no reasonable Man can be so weak as not to see, that the calling in question one Part of our Blessed Saviours Revelation, must lessen the Force and Credit of the other. For if Men can once be brought to think it not incumbent upon them to believe the Doctrines he has revealed upon his Authority alone, they will quickly persuade themselves that it is equally as unnecessary to follow the Rules and Precepts

cepts he has laid down for the Conduct of their Lives ; since if his Authority be not sufficient in the one Case, it will equally prove as weak in the other. For the Reasons for giving Credit to any Author or Teacher of Religion must be Uniform : If a Man falsely pretend to an Authority to require my Belief of some particular Doctrines, I have great Reason to suspect him in other Cases, because nothing but an honest and sincere Man is worthy of my Credit and Regard in any Case, especially in those of a Religious Nature.

THIS the Opposers of Christianity, and therefore Enemies of Mankind are sufficiently sensible of, tho' they are Cunning enough to conceal it. They cannot be satisfied with the common Benefits of Society ; therefore they imagine that if they are once able to unhinge Men's Minds, and thereby bring Things into a State of Anarchy and Confusion, they shall then be able to carve for themselves, and in the common Hurry secure a larger Share of the Spoil. If they were openly to declare their Sentiments against Morality, and to assure Mankind that there were no such Things as Virtue and Vice, that People therefore are under no Restraint, but are at Liberty to act as they please, they know the Generality of Mankind are so fully per-

persuaded of the contrary, that they would not give the least Attention to what they assert, but rather look upon them with scorn and contempt, and treat them as they really deserve, like the common Pests of Society. They therefore proceed in a more artful Manner, and if Men be not well aware of them, will thereby compass their Ends.

MEN have been long brought up in the Opinion that the Practice of Moral Duties is Incumbent on them, nor can they be easily persuaded to believe the contrary. It must be by many artful windings and turnings that they can be brought to think indifferently of the Necessity of Justice and Equity. Our Adversaries therefore knowing this, begin with Censuring some particular Doctrines of the Christian Revelation, or perhaps absolutely denying that there are any such Doctrines inculcated, or else interpreting them in such a Manner that their Glosses shall quite conceal the real Meaning of the Doctrine which the Gospel inculcates, and cast another upon it, which it was never intended to have, not doubting, but if they shall be able by this Means to bring into Discredit what our Blessed Saviour has delivered in those Points, or at least to render them confused in their Opinions about them, it will then be no difficult

Matter to proceed, and to make People think as indifferently concerning the Necessity of all Moral Duties, the Directions concerning both proceeding from the same Divine Instructor. So that let these Opposers of true Christianity, I mean, such as it is taught and handed down to us in the Gospel, pretend as much as they please, to be the great Patrons of Morality, we have sufficient Reason to suspect their Designs, since a Disregard to it is the necessary Consequence of all that they Intend or Design.

MANY likewise of the Doctrines of the Church of *Rome* have the same tendency, such as those which preach up Pardons and Indulgences, and works of Supererogation, Doctrines entirely calculated to draw off Mens Minds by degrees from having that Veneration for the great and substantial Duties of Morality which the Precepts of the Gospel impress upon them, in as much as they assure them, that Christ has promised them Pardon of all their Sins, tho' never so many or never so great, or which they have persisted in to the last Period of their Lives, if so be they do but confess them to a Priest, and are desirous of receiving Absolution at his Hands, which is lessening as far as lies in their Power, all true Regard for Morality, with-

without appearing at first sight to intend it. Thus do they deceive Men, and lull their Consciences to sleep, 'till awaking in Eternity, they then shall find themselves fatally deceived.

THE like Arts and Stratagems do some of our modern Enthusiasts take, tho' somewhat in a different Manner. Their Doctrine is, that if a Man does but believe in Christ, and rely wholly upon the Merits of his Death and Sufferings, tho' his Life and Conversation should happen to be entirely Contradictory to the direct Precepts of the Gospel, yet he shall be saved, as God will bring him, by an irresistible Grace, time enough unto Salvation: A Doctrine which saps the Foundation of all Religion, as it wholly destroys that Principle which only can render it rewardable in Man, and therefore acceptable to God, viz. the free Will of Man. For if Men are to look upon themselves only as mere Machines, without any Power or Will of their own to direct them, they may very justly Complain on being called to account for those Actions, which according to this System of things, they could not help performing; every Sanction of Religion becomes useless and unnecessary, and the whole Christian Scheme for Salvation is at once foolish and absurd.

But how contrary to this are the Doctrines of our Saviour as delivered in the Gospel. We are there taught, that without asking, the Spirit will not be given, nay not even then, unless we, asking with Faith, trust in the Promises of God.

Now this implies Free Will, and proves that our Saviour never intended that we should rely upon the entire Assistance of the Holy Spirit in such a Manner, as not to make use of our Endeavors to live according to the Precepts of the Gospel, but only that we might assure ourselves, that if we were not wanting on our Part, in exerting all our Faculties and Abilities to perform the Will of God, that then the Almighty in Compassion to our Infirmities would grant us the Grace of his Holy Spirit to co-operate with us, and thereby to supply our manifold Defects. But to proceed.

Now there are other Adversaries of our Holy Religion, who have charged it with being defective in Point of Morality, and from thence have inferred that it could not be of Divine Original, since if God had been the Author of it, it would have been absolutely perfect in that as well as other Respects. The Points they instance in, are private Friendship and Zeal for the Public Good. These, they say, our Religion

ligion does not particularly require of us, but that they are Virtues purely voluntary in a Christian. But let us examine a little into the Matter. By Friendship they tell us, is not meant that common Benevolence and Charity, which every Christian is obliged to shew towards all Men, and in particular towards his fellow Christians, his Neighbor, Brother and Kindred of what ever Degree, but that peculiar Relation, which is formed by a Consent and Harmony of Minds, by mutual Esteem and reciprocal Tendernefs and Affection, and which we emphatically call Friendship. But I would ask these Men, what it is that makes this Friendship a Virtue? They will not surely Answer, that it is the bare Relation which Friends stand in to each other, that makes it so, if they do, they may as well call Brotherhood, or Neighborhood, or Acquaintance, or a Similitude of Studies or Education Virtues. But certainly that which makes Friendship a Virtue, consisteth in those mutual good Offices, by which it is cultivated and preserved; and if so, tho' the Word Friendship be not to be found in the whole New Testament, yet those Offices which adorn that Relation, which are the only Virtues of it, and which are essential to it, we shall find commanded by the Christian

Law. That obliges us to every thing that is Virtuous and Praise worthy, or even of good Report, and in the most disinterested Manner to do good, where we hope for no return. We are by that commanded to be of the same Mind one towards another, and to perform all the mutual Offices of Affection and Benevolence; and when this happens to be more remarkably done between a few, we call it Friendship; but then it is only limiting those Expressions of Kindness and Good Will to some Particulars which the Christian Religion commands more universally to every one that is capable of receiving them. Nay I make no difficulty of Affirming, that there is not any particular Office of this their so much applauded and admired Friendship, but what is more eminently contained in *St. Paul's* Character of Charity. And whoever reads the New Testament will find, that that Love of our Neighbor, which is there enjoined, and made the grand Mark and Characteristic of a Christian, comprehends in it all the Offices of Kindness which one Man can owe to another in any Relation. A Friendship built upon any other Principles than what Christian Charity recommends, is so far from being a great Virtue, that it is nothing else but a want of Social Af-

Affection to the rest of Mankind. And the like may be said for the Love of our Country, which can never be a Virtue, but when it proceeds upon a Principle of Universal Benevolence, and a desire to perform the greatest Good we can to our fellow Creatures.

HAVING then thus examined into those Objections of our Adversaries against our most Holy Religion, as far as concerns the Subject we are upon, we are all, I hope, convinced of the weakness of them, and of their Design in making so great a Stir about them. That how much soever they would be thought Friends of Mankind, they plainly appear to be their greatest Enemies, by endeavoring to unsettle their Minds with respect to Religion, which all Wise Men have ever regarded, as they have found it to be the only Foundation and Bulwark of all Society. For there is nothing that will be able to keep Men steady in the performance of their Duties in their several Stations of Life, but that which can reach their Consciences, to effect which nothing can prevail so much, as a firm Belief of the Doctrines of Religion. When all Human Methods fail, the Ties which that lays upon the Consciences of Men, will hold them fast. They who have their Minds once furnished

with the true Principles of Christianity are not to be tempted from their Obedience to the Laws and Subjection to those who are set over them, thro' any worldly Considerations, because they are firmly persuaded, that whosoever resisteth Authority, resisteth the Ordinance of God; they who therefore resist, shall receive to themselves Damnation.

IF therefore we have any regard for the Honor and Glory of our Sovereign, and earnestly desire the Prosperity and Happiness of the Community of which we are Members, let us manifest such our Respect for them, by encouraging and promoting all we can the Belief and Practice of true Religion; for we are assured by the Spirit of God in my Text, that Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People. With respect to particular Persons this Life is a State of Trial and Probation only, since they are capable of Rewards and Punishments in another Life after this; But with respect to Nations and Kingdoms, this World is the only Place for God to shower down his Blessings upon, or visit them with his Judgments in.

LET us then take Care, least either by our Prophaneness or Superstition, or by the Immorality and Wickedness of our
Lives,

Lives, we provoke the Almighty to visit us with his Judgments; but let us rather, not only with our Lips, but also in our Actions express the grateful Sense we entertain for the many Blessings we enjoy under the happy Auspices of our most Gracious Sovereign, and with Sincerity of Heart, beg of the Almighty to continue them to us and our Posterity in his Illustrious House; so shall we approve ourselves good Christians and good Subjects, secure to ourselves in this our Mortal State, the Divine Blessing and Protection, and upon the close of it quit this Stage with a good Hope full of Immortality. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, may be the Lot of all who hear me this Day, even for the Sake and Merits of his eternal and only begotten Son Jesus Christ, our most Blessed Redeemer and Saviour; to which Father and Son, together with the Holy Ghost, the adorable Three in the ever Blessed and undivided Unity, be ascribed, as is most justly due, of us all Men, all Love, Honor and Obedience, Might, Majesty and Dominion, Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, both now, and through succeeding Periods of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

*Christians should be Quiet and mind their
own Business:*

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH

O F
N O R W I C H,

BEFORE THE HONORABLE

Sir *HENRY GOULD*, Knt.

One of the JUSTICES of the COURT of
COMMON PLEAS.

On SUNDAY the 30th of *November*, 1766.

Being the TIME appointed by his MAJESTY,
for holding the SPECIAL COMMISSION,
in order to TRY the PERSONS concerned
in the late dreadful RIOT that was
raised in that CITY and COUNTY.

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Philadelphia, Pa.

ST. R. M. O. N.

CAT. MEDICAL CHURCH

ST. R. M. O. N.

ST. R. M. O. N.

ST. R. M. O. N.

ST. R. M. O. N.

ST. R. M. O. N.

THE P R E F A C E.

THE *World* perhaps will be surprised at seeing a Discourse in Print, which it seems, when delivered from the Pulpit, gave great Offence. But the Author's Reason for thus submitting it to the Perusal of the Public is, that he finds it has been misrepresented by some, and misunderstood by others, owing he hopes, in a great Measure, to its not being clearly heard by the Audience, who were very numerous upon that Occasion. By publishing it therefore, they have now an Opportunity given them of reconsidering it; and if it is read with the same Candor and Impartiality with which it was composed, their Prejudices against it will, he should hope, be then entirely removed.

TOPCROFT, Jan. 20, 1767.

THE
P. R. T. A. C. E.

I. THESSALONIANS, IV. II.

That ye study to be Quiet, and to do your own Business, and to work with your Hands, as we have commanded you.

THE Peace and Happiness of Mankind even in this World, is one great End our gracious Creator had in View in all his several Dispensations. To this End tend his Law delivered to *Moses* from *Mount Sinai*, and the various Exhortations to the Observance of it by succeeding Prophets; and our Blessed Saviour was so far from having any Design by his coming to destroy either the Law or the Prophets, that by the Precepts of the Gospel he fulfilled them, or supplied what was wanting or deficient in them. Former Dispensations had only aimed at Vices themselves, but the Gospel strikes at the Root from whence they proceed. By confining People to their own Business and to what alone concerns them, it of
Course

Course prevents their injuring or disturbing their Neighbors in their Affairs, and thereby preserves Love and Affection, Peace and good Order amongst them.

OF this Nature is the Apostle's Precept in my Text, which may not improperly be called a Precept of our Blessed Lord, since *St. Paul* gave it, as inspired by his Divine Spirit. And never was there a greater occasion for enforcing it, than at present, when a Seditious Spirit seems to have gotten Possession of the Nation in General, which has broke forth here and in many other Parts of the Kingdom, in the most Outrages, Tumults and Disorders, tending to destroy all Order and Decorum, by setting aside the Legislative Authority, thereby endeavoring, as far as they were able, to overset our most excellent Constitution, the dreadful Consequence of which must have been a total Anarchy and Confusion.

THAT these tumultuous Disorders were put a stop to, before the Effects of them became so terrible, was, under Providence, owing to the vigorous Interposition of the Civil Power, who shewed by their spirited Behavior upon this Occasion, that they would not unconcernedly set down to behold them trampling under Feet their Laws and Liberties, and destroying and
con-

confounding the Rights and Properties of their Neighbors and fellow Citizens. Putting this noble Resolution in Execution, they soon reduced things into their former Order and Regularity, which through the Prudence of that worthy Gentleman,* who this Year presides at the Head of this City, and that of the other Magistrates and principal Inhabitants, together with the Assistance of a Military Force, which his Majesty was graciously pleased to order them at their Request, have since been preserved. The Ring Leaders of this horrid Disturbance being taken and committed to Custody, Application was made to our most gracious Sovereign for a Special Commission to try and bring them to speedy Justice; which his Majesty, ever ready to hearken to the reasonable Requests of his Subjects, whom he governs with all the Tenderness and Affection of a Parent, has condescended to grant them. These unhappy Criminals therefore will soon be made sensible, that as they have dared to trample upon Authority, the Rulers and Dispensers of it are the Ministers of God, Revengers to execute Wrath upon them for such their Presumption.

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BUT I am sensible, that though Things are thus outwardly quiet and composed, yet that there is still a Spirit of Strife and Contention lying lurking within the Breasts of some, which only waits a convenient Opportunity of exerting itself again in the like dreadful Tumults and Disorders. It is therefore my Duty, as a Minister and Disciple of the Prince of Peace, and agreeable to the Office I here Sustain, to warn them (if there be any such here, as in all probability there may) of the Danger they expose themselves to in disturbing the Public Peace, and thereby endeavoring to draw every thing into Anarchy and Confusion, since they may assure themselves, that they will be vigourously opposed, and when brought to Justice, be convinced that their Rulers bear not the Sword in Vain, and likewise to exhort them seriously to consider, that by proceeding after this Manner, they not only destroy their temporal Peace and Quiet, and bring Infamy and Disgrace, Wretchedness and Poverty both upon themselves and Families, but they likewise act repugnant to his Laws, before whose Tribunal they will be judged, whom they will find to be no respecter of Persons, but he that doeth Evil, shall receive for the Evil that he hath done, viz.

viz. his Portion in that dreadful State, where the Devil and his Angels are reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.

To this Purpose therefore I propose laying before them the Duty incumbent upon us all to live in Peace and Quietness with our Neighbors; for which End I thought, I could not pitch upon any Subject more proper than the Advice of St. Paul to his *Thessalonian* Converts, viz. *Of studying to be Quiet and to do their own Business, and to work with their own Hands, as he had commanded them.* I will therefore in the further Prosecution of this Subject, first enquire, what we are to understand by the Words themselves, and then see the Benefits which will arise from the Observance of the Duty enjoined in them, and the Obligations we all are under to such Observance.

Now the original Word, φιλοσιμεισθαι, which is here translated to study, is of a very intense Signification. It implies a great Earnestness and Intention of Mind, such as Men are wont to use in the Pursuit of Reputation and Applause, of the Honors and Preferments of this World, and by its Etymology denotes a Man's placing his Ambition therein, and

regarding it as a Point of Honor. It is certain Holy Emulation, and what the *Poet Hesiod* very elegantly calls αγαθὴν ἐρίδα, a good and honorable Contention.

BUT what are we thus earnestly to study after? It must surely be something of a very difficult and arduous Nature; and yet it is only to be Quiet, to live Peaceably and Amicably with one another. But why then should the Apostle make use of a Word, implying such a Vehemence of Care and Desire? If he had commanded us upon some harsh disagreeable Duty, such an Expression had not been improper; but to be Quiet only, one would imagine to be the most easy, agreeable Duty to us of any. The judicious and inspired Writer therefore cannot mean by the Word, *νοῦν ἄλειν*, to be Quiet, that we should set ourselves down in a slothful Idleness, or pass away our Lives in drowsy Indifference, without minding or regarding what passes in this World. For this were quite contrary to our Nature, and entirely inconsistent with what we were originally intended for; all our Parts and Faculties being formed for, and their Health and Powers depending upon an industrious Exercise and Activity. It must therefore be something else, which the Apostle means by being Quiet, something
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he intends thereby to advise us against, that is inconsistent with doing our own Business, with minding our own Affairs, which in the following Words he immediately exhorts us to. And what else can that be, but that Spirit of Strife and Contention, which has ever since the fall shewn itself to have taken hold of the human Breast, owing in a great Measure to an idle pragmatistical Medling in what does not concern us, a curious Inquisitiveness into our Neighbor's Affairs, an envious Spirit at beholding him in a more flourishing Condition than ourselves, tho' it be in a great Measure owing to our own Sloth and Profuseness that he is so, or else to that ungenerous, unbecoming Behavior, which *St. Paul* describes in his first Epistle to Timothy, of such as wander from House to House, who are not only Idle, but Tatlers also, and Busy Bodies, speaking Things which they ought not, as abusing their Governors, talking disrespectfully of their Superiors, endeavoring to render contemptible the Doctrines and Precepts of Religion thro' their dissolute Mirth and prophane Jest, divulging the Secrets and private Concerns of Families, Defaming and Censuring Things which they perhaps are no proper Judges of, and thereby sowing the Seeds

of Discord and Contention amongst their Neighbors and fellow Citizens, the terrible Consequences of which we too often find to be seditious Tumults and Disorders.

FROM one or other of these Causes, I make no doubt, did the late Commotions here arise. As Idleness and a Love of Company, which is commonly attended with an Excess of Drinking, to the great Impair of their Healths and Fortunes, drew many together, they naturally fell into Discourse about the Hardships they each sustained from Poverty and Want, which they, blind to their own Misconduct, as is too often the Case, wholly imputed to the high Price Provisions bear at this particular Season, and which they likewise imagined, was entirely owing to the Extortion of those, who supply our Markets with the Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life. As these Notions had made great Impressions upon their Minds, and they found their Distresses every Day encreasing, they soon raised their Passions to such a Pitch, that they became Deaf to the cool Voice of Reason, would hearken to no Counsel or Advice, but immediately excited such Disturbances, as seemed to threaten a total Overthrow of all Order and Regularity,

gularity, Equity and Justice; their Aim being not so much to redress their own Grievances (at least they took not the right Way to do it) as to confound and destroy every Necessary of Life, and to level those with themselves, who being placed by Providence in superior Stations, lived therefore in more Ease and Affluence than they could do, and thus were these Rioters the Means of subverting that regular and truly beautiful Subordination which our Creator has appointed for the better carrying on the Designs of his Providence in this lower World. By their Proceeding therefore in the Manner they did, they not only opposed their Governors and the Laws of their Country, but were actually engaged in Rebellion against their God.

WHEREAS had they followed the Apostle's Advice in my Text, *of studying to be Quiet, and to do their own Business, and to work with their own Hands, as he had commanded them*; they would in the first Place have not been involved in those distressed Circumstances they then found themselves to be in, which indeed the Dearness of Provisions at this Season rather encreased, as they might then have employed that Time, which they had now, it is but too probable, spent in Idleness and Folly,

in providing Means to obtain, if not all the Conveniencies, yet at least the Necessaries of Life, and not only so, but would also have escaped spending in Excess and Debauchery what might have supported their Families for some Time, tho' not perhaps in that Abundance, as is the Case, when Provisions are sold at cheaper Prices.

SECONDLY, this Manner of Proceeding would have caused them to reflect on what might be the Causes for that excessive Dearness of Provisions at this particular Juncture. Whether it was wholly owing to the Extortion of those concerned in selling them, or whether there might not be some other Reason alledged, that might equally account for it, and that in a Manner more becoming us as Christians to suppose? For if it was wholly owing to the first Cause, they must suppose these People to be entirely void of common Justice and Humanity, which to imagine so many of our fellow Christians to be guilty of, with no other view, than merely to distress them and enrich themselves, is such a Breach of that Royal Law of Charity, which our most excellent Religion commands us to shew to every one, as ought to make any of us Blush, who could be so ungenerous as to give the
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least Harbor to so unworthy an Opinion of them. Besides could they imagine that their Superiors would ever long have permitted them to have been guilty of such an Extortion towards their poor Neighbors, when, if they had entertained no Consideration for them, which I am sure they never found to be the Case, they must have seen, if they in the least reflected upon it, that the Burden of it would in the End have fallen upon themselves.

If then from some such Considerations as these they should have perceived that the dearness of Provisions at this Time was not entirely owing to the Extortion of those concerned in the Disposal of them, they would then have been naturally led to have enquired into what other Cause it might be ascribed; and if upon such an Examination, they should find that this Dearness was in a great Measure owing to a Failure in the last Year's Crop, they would then have perceived that this was not entirely owing to those who are concerned in supplying our Markets, but that it was directed by the Hand of Providence, who for some Wise or just Reason or another had inflicted on us this Calamity; either to convince us that we are not absolutely to depend

pend upon our own Industry and Skill in the Culture and Management of our Lands, vainly imagining that alone to be sufficient to procure us a Plenty, but that we are likewise indebted to him for our Maintenance and Support, who at first created us, and is continually preserving us, and who alone is able to make our Cup run o'er with Oil and Wine. Or else as a Punishment to correct and amend in us what he may see amiss in our Conduct and Behavior; and this if we duly consider it, we may justly suppose to be the Case. For never was there a greater Occasion for such Correction than at present, when Vice has publicly erected her Standard, and her Cause is supported by Prophaneness and Debauchery, Rioting and Excess, and every other Species of Licentiousness and Dissolution. If then our unhappy deluded Brethren had in the least reflected upon any one of these Causes, and had seriously weighed and pondered them in their Minds, we may Charitably suppose they would have produced such happy Effects, as would have prevented them from launching forth into such Excesses, as they have now unfortunately been engaged in, would have made them tremble, but barely to think of the Consequences of such their Conduct; espec-

especially when they came to reflect, that they had by such their Behavior been found fighting not only against the Laws of their Country, but likewise against their God and Saviour.

You see then, my Brethren, by this short Sketch, imperfect as I am sensible it is, to what Cause it was owing that your Poor unhappy Neighbors have brought themselves by their great Misconduct into such fatal Circumstances, as renders it absolutely necessary for the Safety of the Community, and as an Example to others, to bring them to condign Punishment; and likewise how great a Guilt they have hereby drawn upon their Souls, which, unless timely repented of, will render them offensive in the sight of the Almighty.

LET me then entreat those of you who may be inclined to the same Way of Thinking, to consider well what you are doing, not to be rash and impetuous in your Resolutions, not to hearken to every idle Story that shall be told you, in order to inflame your Minds with Anger and Discontent. This indeed requires great Care and Caution to guard yourselves against. For not only the natural Curiosity which is in most of us, and the Pleasure we are apt to take in either telling

ling or hearing some new Thing, some Grievance that relates to either ourselves or Neighbors, but also the like Dispositions in others make us in continual Danger of falling into this Vice. For whatever command we may have over ourselves, how able soever we may be to suppress what we ourselves are so Subject to, yet as there are many others, who will always take a Pleasure in informing us of any thing of this Nature, we ought to be particularly careful, least we suffer our Passions to be raised and inflamed by the Stories they shall inform us of. For as these are Temptations that seem to fall in with our natural Humors and Inclinations, it is therefore the more Dangerous, and consequently demands the greater Circumspection.

To avoid as much as possible any Temptations of this Nature, I must beg them to permit me to impress upon their Minds, the Advice of the Apostle in my Text, viz. *to be Quiet*, i. e. to live Peaceably and Amicably with one another, laying aside all Animosities, Angers and Contentions, to endeavor as far as lays in their Power to befriend each other, to love as Brethren, in short, never to do that to another, which, all Circumstances considered, they would not have done to them-

themselves. To remove, or at least lessen the principal Grievance they have long been, and are still complaining of, viz. the Distresses themselves and Families undergo from the Dearness of Provisions, let me advise them, *to do their own Business, and to work with their own Hands*, as the Apostles, who were commissioned by our Blessed Lord and Saviour himself to preach the Gospel, have commanded them. For as such a Practice will not only keep them out of Idle and Disorderly Company, and thereby hinder them from hearing any thing that may inflame their Minds; so will it likewise be a Means of keeping them from wasting that little Pittance which should go towards the Support of themselves and Families, and by a proper Industry in their respective callings, encreasing the small Income they at present Possess. For I will venture to affirm that there are many in this great and populous City, who are now grappling with Poverty and Distress, who, had they been Industrious to have earnt a Maintenance might have enjoyed a pleasing Competency, notwithstanding the present Scarcity there is amongst us.

AND above all, I would advise every one of us to impress upon our Minds Religious Principles; for these well grounded

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ed and established, will prove the Means of Curbing those restless and uneasy Thoughts, which too often arise in our Minds. Religion does not extirpate but regulate our Passions. It makes us contented with our Station in Life, whatever it may chance to be; because it is that which Providence has assigned us. It makes us resigned under what ever Misfortunes we may be, because it teaches us to join our Blessed Redeemer in saying, *Not my Will, O God, but thine be done.* It instructs us to love our Brethren not only as they were created by the same Almighty Power, but more especially as redeemed by the same most precious Blood. It commands us to be Industrious in our Callings and Stations, by assuring us. that if we will not Work, neither shall we Eat. It enjoins us to be Obedient to Government, and to submit to Authority; because there is no Power but of God, and the Powers that be, are ordained of God. To our not having duly considered these Things, and not being actuated by these Principles of Religion, may be ascribed those many Crimes and Enormities that at present prevail amongst us.

IF each of us then would endeavor according to our several Abilities to impress

press them upon the Minds of others, and at the same Time suffer them to have their due Effect upon ourselves, then might we hope to escape those Divine Judgments with which Nations and Kingdoms are generally threatned for their Impieties; our poorer Brethren might then reasonably expect the charitable Assistance of their richer Neighbors, and Experience the blessed Effects of it in seasonable Supplies; and all of us, both Rich and Poor, be entitled to his Divine Protection, who has promised, that if we endeavor to perform his Will on Earth as it is done in Heaven, that he will bless us with Peace, Plenty and Prosperity here, will grant us the Assistance of his Holy Spirit to guide and direct us in our Passage thro' this World, and upon our departure out of it, will for the Sake of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and only Saviour, receive us into those Blessed Mansions, where Love, Harmony and Peace for ever dwell, there to be admitted to the Fruition of him, in whose Presence will be fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand, are Pleasures for Evermore. To whom with the Son and Holy Ghost, three Persons, but one God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, of us, of all Men, of Angels and Arch-
Angels,

(164)

Angels, Cherubims and Seraphims, all
Might, Majesty and Dominion, Adora-
tion and Praise, Love, Honor and Obe-
dience, both now, and through succeeding
Ages to all Eternity. *Amen.*



The Blessedness of Good Men after Death.

A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AT THE
PARISH CHURCH
OF
T O P C R O F T,
IN
N O R F O L K.

On SUNDAY the 22d Day of *January*, 1764.
Being the Sunday Se'night after the Interment

OF
The Rev. *BENJAMIN FROST*, M. A.

RECTOR of that Parish,

Who died suddenly the 10th, and was buried
there the 14th of that same Month.

(164)

Angels, Cherubims and Seraphims, all
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The Right of God men after Death.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

WARRIS HALL

ON THE 10th DAY OF JANUARY 1854.

THOUGH the Revelation of the
Word of God, out of which the
generally thought to contain many things
worthy to be compared with the
Word of God, the said Day of January 1854.
Text must be allowed to be the
only one being a solemn Declaration as
the Blessed State of God in which the
Law, which, that it might not be an
obstacle by us, is admitted to be a
Preparation and a Guide in our
to proceed in our life, and in our
to be a Guide in our life, and in our
to be a Guide in our life, and in our
to be a Guide in our life, and in our

IV. REVELATIONS, 13.

And I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the Dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labors; and their Works do follow them.

THOUGH the Revelations of St. John, the Book out of which the Words now read to you are taken, be generally thought to contain many Things difficult to be comprehended by us in this our Mortal State, yet the meaning of my Text must be allowed to be Plain and Easy, it being a Solemn Declaration of the Blessed State of Good Men after this Life; which, that it might not pass unobserved by us, is introduced with a Solemn Preparation and Address, in order to procure our more particular Attention. *I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, write, Blessed are the Dead which die*

in the Lord from henceforth; for the farther Establishment of which, the Spirit is made to give Testimony to it, by alledging the Reasons for such a Declaration; Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labors, and their Works do follow them.

THE Judicious Compilers of our most excellent Liturgy, paid so great a regard to this Passage of Holy Writ, and thought it so well worthy our more particular Observation, that they took it into the Service they composed for the Burial of the Dead, by way of Consolation to the Friends of the deceased. For since our Blessed Lord hath now conquered Death, those that die in the Lord, are no more to be lamented, but should be the Subjects of our Joy; their Work being done, their Warfare accomplished, they now enjoy Crowns of Victory as the Reward of their Labors.

WERE it not for these comfortable Assurances, how dreadful must be the Approach of Death, not only to the Parties themselves, but also to their Friends and Relations. Death is not agreeable to Human Nature; it is the Punishment inflicted on it for the Transgression of our first Parents. Upon its Approach then had Man no Expectation, no Hope of a
future

future State to succeed this, but his whole prospect should centre in the dismal View of Annihilation, it would by no Means be surprising that at that dreadful Hour his Soul should shrink back, and he should join with *Hezekiah* in Prayer to God to spare him yet one fifteen Years more. Nor in these Circumstances would this melancholy Scene be confined to the dying Person only, but it would extend its Influences to his dearest and most valuable Connections. For when the Hour should Approach that the desire of their Eyes should be taken from them, those, for whose sake Life is so desirable, without the least Hope or Expectation of their ever meeting again, who could blame them, who could reprove them, if, like as *Rachel* is described by the Prophet as Mourning for her Children because they were not, they should likewise weep and mourn, and refuse to be comforted, since Death had pronounced an Eternal Separation. But now Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel, and we are by that assured, that here we have no continuing City, but we seek one to come, we look upon ourselves only as Sojourners, who must pass thro' the Gate of Death, before we can arrive at the Heavenly Canaan.

BUT notwithstanding these comfortable Affurances, Death is to many of us still very terrible, and we cannot even now support the thought of its approaches without great Horror and Consternation that those two dear Companions, the Soul and Body should not separate from each other without some Reluctance may easily be accounted for, as by their Creator they were originally intended to have always been Associates to each other, and never have experienced a Separation; their parting therefore is to be looked upon as a Punishment for the Sins of Mankind, which, tho' inflicted in the mildest Manner imaginable, must still be irksome and disagreeable. But it must be owing to another Cause that the Approach of Death should make us tremble and shrink back, as unable to support the Thoughts of it. And what is that? Our own Consciences, if we put this Question home to them, will soon inform us, that it is entirely owing to our corrupt Lives and Conversations. We are conscious to ourselves that our Actions being sinful must be displeasing to the Almighty. We are therefore apprehensive, that when we come to appear before him, he will refuse to acknowledge us, and pour forth the Vials of his Wrath upon us. This is the
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great Sting of Death, which we can never extricate, unless we first remove the Cause, and that is only to be done by a sincere and hearty Repentance, not to be deferred to a Death-bed, when we can give but little Proof of its being sincere, but when we are in full Health, and in the perfect Vigor of our Constitutions. How dreadful then must the Consideration of that State be, in comparison of which even Annihilation is rather to be wished for and desired ! How shocking not only to the Person himself, who is upon the Point of Departure, but to any one, who has the least Connection with him, to think, that as soon as this Scene is once closed, his State is unalterably fixed, and that without the least Prospect, the least Hope of Salvation. For the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness, against all who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness. This indeed must be owned to be a melancholy Prospect. But is there no way to avoid and escape this dreadful Evil ? Yes ; Holiness of Life and Obedience to the Precepts of the Gospel will remove all that dreadful Array with which Death is often accompanied, and the Prospect of it will then, instead of being shocking, be rather pleasing and desirous, inasmuch as we are assured by the Spirit of God, that those who

die in the Lord, are blessed, because they rest from their Labors and their Works do follow them.

THIS, it is much to be wished, was the general Condition of Mankind; but human Nature is frail and weak, and every Moment liable to be seduced by those who lie in wait to deceive. In order then to escape the Pollutions of the World through Lust, we should endeavor to follow the Precept left us by the great Law-giver *Moses*, viz. *To consider our latter End*. This we should find to be true Wisdom, as Death is what we all must one time or other undergo. No Man can tell how soon it may be his turn; for though now to all appearance he may be in his full Strength and Vigor, and from his natural Constitution he may promise to himself many Years yet in store, yet before the next Moment be arrived, Death may strike him, and according as his Actions shall then appear to the great Judge both of quick and dead, shall be the everlasting Condition of his Soul. Providence has lately been pleased to afford us many Instances of this sudden approach of Death; amongst some of which I beg leave to mention that of your late worthy Rector, who in company with his Friends, and in the midst of Conversation, was without any immediate previous Warning called
away

away from this earthly transitory Scene of Things to that State which admits of no change or alteration. To him indeed such a sudden change was far from being unwelcome, as his whole Life and Conversation were strictly conformable to the Precepts of the Gospel. As a Minister of Christ, he not only rebuked Vice, but was himself a Pattern of the Virtues he enforced. In his private Character, he was an affectionate Husband, a kind and indulgent Master, and a sincere Friend. In all his several Dealings with Mankind, he was just, upright and honest. In him the Poor ever found a Friend; and to visit the fatherless and Widow in their Affliction, and to comfort and relieve them was his constant and daily Practice. In making use of the Enjoyments of Life he set an amiable Example of Moderation and Temperance. These his moral Perfections were all adorned, and, if I may so speak, enobled by a most exemplary Piety and a serious Regard to Things of a Religious Nature. The Will of God he endeavored to make the Rule of his Actions, and where he found human Frailty interfered with his Duty, he with an humble and pious Hope implored the Divine Assistance to direct his Steps to the way of Peace. Thus prepared, Death without the usual slow Methods of Disease and Pain, was the greatest Favor the Almighty

mighty could confer on him ; for next to being exempted wholly from Death, quitting the World in the manner he did, is certainly most eligible. We do indeed in our Liturgy pray against a sudden Death ; but the meaning of that Petition I take to be, against our being removed hence, before we are prepared. As none of us can be certain how soon it may be our Lot to be called hence, and summoned to Judgment, that our Lamps may not then be to trim, let our Blessed Savior's Caution ever be fresh in our Remembrance, viz. *to watch, because the Son of Man cometh at an Hour when we know not*, that whenever he cometh and knocketh, we may joyfully welcome his Return, as hoping to be received with that Divine Salutation, *well done ye good and faithful Servants, ye have been faithful over a few Things, I will make you Rulers over many Things, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord*. The way and means hereto is to examine our Lives and Conversations by the Rule of God's Commandments ; and whereinfoever we shall perceive ourselves to have offended, either by Will, Word, or Deed, there to bewail our own Sinfulness, and to confess ourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of Amendment of Life. This is the Advice our Church gives us, when she exhorts us to partake of the Holy Sacrament, and which,
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if we would follow, would make us not only meet Partakers at that Holy Table, but qualify us likewise for those unspeakable Joys which are prepared for them, who love and fear God. But the Misfortune is, though we hear this often repeated, yet we seem to pay little or no Regard to it. For if we did, we could not be so flagrantly negligent in the performance of that Holy Rite, as we are, nor yet lead such Lives, as must make Death, whenever he approaches, dreadful and shocking to us only to think of. It is very common for such Persons, when under these unhappy Circumstances to send for their Minister, though perhaps in their time of Health, not only he, but the Christian Religion itself hath been the Subject of their dissolute Mirth and Scorn. And then, his Advice, his Assistance, his Prayers are earnestly begged for and entreated. But alas! what can we then do? We are under almost as great a Difficulty as themselves what either to think or say. Loth we are to declare our Sentiments, and yet the necessity of their Case makes us afraid of concealing them. We are fearful of throwing them into Despair on the one Hand, and of raising in them false and groundless Hopes on the other. We are obliged therefore to keep to general Topics,
open

open to them by Degrees the Nature of the Christian Covenant, and use all the Art we can to bring them to a hatred of Vice and a love of Goodness, without oppressing or overwhelming their Minds all at once with a Sense of their own vileness, lest they should think themselves quite out of the Reach of God's Mercy. And after we have done all we can, we part from each other with equal Fear and Doubt, and can only wish for what we would gladly have better Grounds for. Who then that rightly considers this, would ever expose himself to such wretched, such deplorable Circumstances! It is now by the Mercy of God in our own Power to prevent all this. By an immediate Repentance and Reformation, and persevering in the Ways of Piety and Virtue, we may so far fit and prepare ourselves against the Hour of Death, that it shall never find us unprovided.

Who then that ever seriously reflects on the Consequences of Things, can hesitate one Moment, whether he should put in Execution so laudable a Purpose. No Man, I am sure, that ever beheld the Agonies and Despair of a dying Sinner, but would dread the doing any Thing that should bring him into the like Circumstances: and on the contrary to see with what Composure and Serenity of Mind a pious good Man,

Man, one who has always endeavored to make as far as he was able the Will of God the Rule of his Actions, receives his Summons out of this Life, but must with *Balaam* cry out, *Lord, let me die, the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.* Yet, notwithstanding the apparent Truth of these Observations, behold we the general Behavior of Mankind, and we should immediately conclude, that they neither dreaded the one, nor desired the other, but were fully convinced that with this Life their Existence was wholly to terminate. They however, who act in this thoughtless manner, and in the time of Health have despised the Threats and rejected with Scorn the Precepts of the Gospel, shall nevertheless in a dying Hour bear Attestation to the Truth of them, and earnestly beg for some small Portion of that Time which they have heedlessly squandered away in Intemperance and Debauchery, in Luxury and Riot, in Scurrillity and Blasphemy. To warn Men of these Things is the Duty and Business of every one, who has the Glory of God and the good of his fellow Creatures at Heart; but it more especially belongs to the Ministers of the Gospel to execute this Office with Care and Fidelity, since they are commissioned to preach the Word; to be instant

stant in Season, and out of Season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine. In conscientiously discharging the Ministerial Function I have known none more eminent than your late worthy Pastor, who embraced every Opportunity that offered to warn Men of their Vices, and with all Diligence exhorted them to turn from the Error of their Ways to Newness of Life. And this he did not only from the Pulpit, but likewise in private Conversation, which, whatever the generality of the World may think, is one great Part of the Ministerial Office. This he performed too with much greater Advantage than many of us, with Grief and Concern I speak it, can do, as his Life and Conversation in no respect contradicted either the Advice he gave, or the Precepts he enforced, esteeming those inexcusable, whose Examples are contradictory to the Doctrines they preach. Under such an Instructor then, to have remained unmoved, would have argued a Spirit truly incorrigible. I hope none therefore, who have enjoyed the Benefit of his Instruction, are to be rankt in the number of those, who, like the deaf Adder, shut their Ears, and refuse to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely. There are many, I make no doubt, who upon hear-
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ing from the Pulpit a Discourse setting forth to them the Doctrines of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, have like *Felix* trembled, and have then resolved to break off their Sins by Repentance, and lead for the future Lives more conformable to the Precepts of the Gospel; who yet, when they are returned home, and there meet their former Companions, soon shake off all their late good Resolutions and forget their trembling; and now the Preacher is absent, they no longer remember his Doctrine, except it be with Displeasure for his Reproof. And yet there is scarce one of these Persons, but who upon hearing the Words of my Text, that *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord*, but would approve it as a most comfortable Assurance, and most sincerely desire that they might be found in that happy Number; and who, should any one inform them that from the Course of their Lives they could have no well-grounded Expectations for such a Hope, but would tremble at the Thoughts, and their Souls perhaps be filled with Anguish and Despair. What then is to be done? The Answer is plain and easy. That Men ought not to deceive themselves with the vain Hopes of obtaining Heaven, when they are destitute of those Qualifications that are essentially necessary

cessary for their Admission into those Blessed Mansions. For could we but convince Men that it is absolutely impossible for a wicked Man dying in a State of Impenitence to be happy after this Life, I am almost morally certain, that they would not lead the Lives they now do. And yet of the truth of this they might soon be convinced, if they would attentively read over the New Testament, without wresting the plain meaning of Scripture in behalf of themselves. But the Misfortune is, that Men are too apt to be self-flatterers, to imagine that they are not so bad as they really are, and thereby continue to deceive themselves, till either Sickness or old Age overtake them, and by turning the Mirror, clearly shew them their true Condition. Then is their fond Security often turned into Despair, and through the dreadful Apprehension of what is like to be their Fate in the other World, render themselves totally unable of rescuing themselves from it. Having hitherto shewn that Impiety and Wickedness, if obstinately persevered in, will inevitably involve us in eternal Misery, it clearly follows that they must be Blessed, who have been so wise as to break off their Sins by Repentance and a Reformation of their Lives. But in what does that Blessedness consist? If we search the Scriptures,

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Things of this World, which otherwise would be too apt wholly to engross our Thoughts, and instead of raising us to what is spiritual and angelic, depress us to what is bestial and carnal. Was Man created for no other Purposes, than the Brutes that perish, and was therefore compounded of nothing but what was corporal, it would then behove him to enjoy Life while he could, to pursue every Pleasure, and gratify every Appetite, tho' even in that case wearisomeness would often succeed : but as this is not the case, and he is endowed with another Principle which is spiritual and eternal, and with a Power likewise of discerning between Good and Evil, it is the highest Folly that can be imagined not to pursue that which has the noblest End in view, which is still further encreased by considering, that the other will involve him in inevitable Misery and Ruin.

IN the next World the virtuous and pious Man shall be inconceivably happy : he shall then rest from all his Labors, from all the Troubles and Vexations he has met with in this World, and the Blessed Effects of his Purity and Holiness shall then attend him to Eternity. His Joy in Heaven will be full in Measure, pure in Quality, and perfect in all Respect to the utmost Capacity

Capacity of his Nature. All his Parts and Faculties shall be raised to the highest Pitch of Perfection; his Body become free from all Corruption and Decay, all Weakness and Disease, and be rendered incorruptible, glorious and spiritual. His Soul be in its Nature perfected, in its Inclinations rectified, and satisfied in its Appetites. His Understanding full of Light, clear and distinct in the Knowledge of Truth, and free from all Error and Ignorance. His Will be always inclined to that which is good, ever ready to comply with God's Blessed Will, and free from all Perverseness and Weakness. In fine his Affections be set in a right Frame and Order, with constant Regularity tending to that which is truly good and excellent, and taking full Delight therein. In that Blessed State he shall enjoy the Blissful Presence and Contemplation of God, regarding him with Love and Favor, and as the Apostle assures us, be made like unto him; the Presence likewise of our Blessed Redeemer, God man, of the Holy Angels, and of all just Men made perfect. And what greater Happiness can there be, than to resemble God, the happiest and most perfect Being in the Universe? what a transporting Expectation is it, that we shall see and live with our Blessed Saviour, be

admitted into the Society and Company of Angels and Arch-Angels, and of the Spirits of just Men, freed from all those Passions and Infirmities, which in this Life render the Conversation even of the best of Men sometimes troublesome or disagreeable to one another. To meet with and converse with all those excellent Persons, those innocent and worthy Souls, whom we have seen, heard or read of in this World? And, which must in its Nature afford us a very great and particular Satisfaction, with many of our dear Relations and intimate Friends, even with those whom we loved as our own Souls, and perhaps with many of our Enemies to whom we shall then be perfectly reconciled, notwithstanding all the warm Contests and peevish Differences which we had with them in this World. But there's still a Circumstance, the Consideration of which must make this Happiness, as great and excellent as it truly is still more desirable, that is, its being eternal, that it will never have an End. As Heaven is an exceeding, so it is an eternal Weight of Glory. It would imbitter and lessen even the Pleasures of Heaven, to see to an End of them, though it were at never so great a Distance. To consider that this vast Treasure of Happiness would one Day be exhausted, and
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that after so many Years were past, we should be again as wretched and miserable, as we were once in this World, would often fill us with many uneasy Thoughts, and render us sometimes distressed even in the midst of Happiness. But when we consider the Joys of Heaven, as endless in Duration, as they are complete and perfect in Degree, we can want nothing further to raise our Desires and quicken our Endeavors after them.

ACTUATED by these Motives may we very well suppose, was this our deceased Friend, as the whole Tenor of his Life and Conversation was an amiable and engaging Proof. For under the Influence of these Principles he became exemplary in the Discharge of every Duty, religious as well as civil. In him we beheld the affectionate Husband, the kind and obliging Neighbor, the exemplary Divine, the pious and good Christian, which all who knew him, will give their Testimony to. Well likewise will it be for us, if we will herein imitate his amiable Example, and by having, as he had the Thoughts of a future State, and the perfect and endless Joy and Happiness of it always in our Minds, we shall thereby keep ourselves steady in our Duty, and reckon the Troubles and Misfortunes of this World not worthy to be
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compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us. Unto which Glory God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Sake and Merits of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our most Blessed Lord and Saviour. Now unto the ever Blessed and undivided Trinity, our God, our Light, our Truth, our Succour and Defence, our Refuge and Comfort, be ascribed by us and all Men, all Honor and Praise, all Might, Majesty and Dominion for Ever and Ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



Preface. Page 7. Line 2. Word 2. Than for then. Letter I. Page 25. Line 7. Word 2. add an s to inform. Line 21. Word 5. In 3 pistles, scratch out the s. Letter II. Page 28. at the end of the third Line, after speak, add the word to, Page 34. at the end of the last Line, scratch out your, & put in their. Page 39. Line 25. Put out y^e comma at fathom, & place it after which, Letter III. Page 45. Line 19. Word 2. for eternal, put external Page 49. Line 19. Word 3. for holding, put beholding. Page 53. ^{line} ~~Page~~ 7. after learned, insert prelate. Letter IV. Page 57. Line 12. between consider & of, insert, some. Page 58. Last line but one, after God, insert the following, [would have answered in all respects the same divine Purpose] Page 65. Line 9. between shall & leave, insert, beg. Page 67. Line 13 Word 1. to ~~absolute~~, put, by. Page 79. at the end of 47th Line make a full stop. Begin the next Line with a great W. Page 88. the 9th Line from the bottom, after terms insert, on, Letter V. Page 96. Line 9. Word 2. For agree ably, put agreeable. Sermon I. Page 104. Line 3. Word 8. Put out, to; Page 108. Line 11. after the Annals of place, the, Page 110. Line 3. Word 3. Put out, much, & insert, must. Page 113. Line 15. Put an s, ~~after~~ Virtue. Page 114. line 14. to Argument, put an s, Page 120. Line 9. Be ~~een~~ use & all, put and. Sermon II. Page 125. Line 15. End of is, put his. Line 17 after God, put of